

TALKS ON ADI SANKARACHARYA'S DAKSHINAMURTI STAVA



SRI RAMANACHARANATIRTHA
NOCHUR VENKATARAMAN

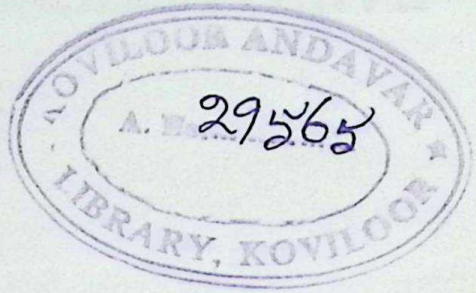
SRI RAMANACHARANATIRTHA NOCHUR VENKATARAMAN



Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman is an Acharya of *Vedānta sampradāya*. At a very young age, this sagely teacher started expounding on the age-old Vedic wisdom of the Upanishads, Gita, Bhagavatam and other texts on *Vedānta*. His discourses and writings are aflame with the power of

Atmajñāna and the fragrance of *bhakti* that one gets an intimation of one's spiritual essence instantaneously. Coming in the lineage of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, Nochur Acharya's talks and writings on Maharshi's teachings are a great guiding force for Self-enquiry.

51



Talks on Adi Sankaracharya's Dakshinamurti Stava

22564

Dakshinamurti Stava

Talks on Adi Sankaracharya's Dakshinamurti Stava

by

Sri Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman



Sri Ramana Maharshi Brahmayasrama

Talks on Adi Sankaracharya's Dakshinamurti Stava

by

Sri Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman

For details about the author, teachings, and to find out how to get this book and more, visit www.VoiceOfRishis.org

The cover picture '*Siva as Yogeswara*'
is a sketch by the author.

© Copyright reserved by the author.

Published by:

Sri Ramana Maharshi Brahmavidyasrama Trust

4/8, Lady Desikachari Road, Chennai - 600 004

Phone (Bangalore): +91 98451 79294, +91 98860 76229,

Phone (Chennai): +91 44 48566333

Email: contact@voiceofrishis.org

First edition: July 2018

Second edition: August 2018

ISBN: 978-81-930569-5-0

Price: ₹ 200

Printed by:

Sri Bharati Printers, Bengaluru

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>Flowers offered at the Feet of Siva</i>	xiii
<i>Transliteration Guide</i>	xix
Meditation Ślokas	1
Introduction	5
Why not Abide in Peace?	5
Nature of the Ātman (Self)	6
<i>Anugraha Tattva</i>	7
The Story of Dakshinamurti	10
The Timeless Night of Śivarātri	13
<i>Samādhi Bhāṣhā</i> —Wordless Speech of the Master	15
From Knowledge to Realisation	16
The Silent Teacher Spoke	18
Essence of <i>Vedānta</i>	20
The One Facing Death	21
Form of Pure Awareness	23
<i>Hṛdaya Sthānam</i>	23
Embodiment of Compassion	24
<i>Guru, Śishya</i> and <i>Upadeśa</i>	25
Heart-to-Heart Transmission through <i>Kṛpā</i> (Grace)	28
The Glorious <i>Guru-tattva</i>	29
Renunciation	32
Chapter One - The Seen and the Seer	35
<i>Viśvam</i>	37
The City Reflected	42

Wake Up from the Dream	48
Release from the Eight Compulsions	50
Do Not Peep into the Inscrutable	51
Combing the Mirror!	55
You are my Reflection	56
Awakening to the Non-Dual	60
Easy Way to Realisation is to Trust the Words of Guru	63
Warm Stream of Contemplation	67
Chapter Two - Experience and Perception	68
The Dog's Tail	72
The Sprout within the Seed	76
Mystery of Time-Space	79
The Story of Creation	81
Vedamātā Tells Tales	83
Glory of the Primordial <i>Brahmavidyā</i>	84
Chapter Three - The Power of <i>Satsaṅga</i>	88
YOU ARE THE LIGHT	92
The Hidden Treasure	95
YOU ARE THAT	96
Churning for Fire	98
The Truth Eternal	100
Revelation of the Self	102
You are the LION—Wake Up and Roar!	104
Dehypnotise Yourself	107
The State of No-otherness	109
Chapter Four - The Light Within	112
The Lamp Inside the Pot	118
Analogy by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi	121

Some Profound Points to Ponder	123
Space Alone Remains	125
Chapter Five - From Delusion to Enlightenment	129
Various Misapprehensions	133
Body-Mind Identifications	134
Two Functions of the Mind	139
Mind-Intellect Identifications	140
Cautions from the Master	142
Some Anecdotes from Acharya's Life	146
Chapter Six - Sleep and Realisation	153
The Eclipse	156
<i>Sushupti</i>	157
Losing Oneself to Gain the Supreme Self	159
From Sleep to Realisation	161
Some Methods to Reflect on this State	163
The Art of Deep Contemplation	165
Chapter Seven - Intimation of the Inner Being	167
Truth is not a State	167
<i>Pratyabhijñā</i>	168
The Eternal behind the Changing	171
<i>Adhyāsa</i> or Superimposition	173
The Three States	176
<i>Chin-mudrā</i>	177
An Anecdote from the life of Acharya Sankara	179
The Illusory Body-consciousness	180
The Threefold 'I'	183
The Quest	184
Probe into the 'I-thought'	187

The Cloudless Sky of <i>Nirvikalpa</i>	188
Chapter Eight - Wake up from the Delusion	194
The Vision	197
Cause and Effect	198
No-otherness	201
The Process of Perception	204
Chapter Nine - The World is Siva	207
<i>Ashṭamūrti</i>	210
Zero and Eight	212
Chapter Ten - The Supreme Glory	215
The Fruit of Realisation	217
Listen, Reflect, Contemplate & Sing	221
Reflect Deeply	225
Some Precious Insights	228
Excerpt One - Gaudapadarika Bhashyavani	228
Excerpt Two - Dialogue between Acharya and Disciple	231
Excerpt Three - Profound discussions on <i>Vedānta</i>	242
Excerpt Four - <i>Upadeśa Sāra</i>	247
<i>Dakṣhinamurti Stava</i>	251
<i>Kailasanathashtakam</i>	255
<i>Glossary</i>	261
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	267



FOREWORD

OM

*"The whole moon and the entire sky
are reflected in one dewdrop on the grass."*

Dakshinamurti Stava of Adi Sankara is a gem amongst the vast trove of *stotras* composed by him. A hymn of praise to Siva, the verses truly reveal the essence of *Jñāna*. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi too gave this *Stava* a high status by translating it into Tamil. What better authority is required to establish its special place? Dakshinamurti is traditionally portrayed as the *Mauna Guru* or the Silent Preceptor. His Silence is the essence of the *Mahāvākyas* that are found at the heart of all the Upanishads. To gain an insight into the nature and depth of that divine and primordial Silence, let us look to Sri Ramana himself to enlighten us. Once while answering the doubts of a devotee, Sri Ramana explained the great impact of Guru's Silence.

Silence is the most potent form of work. However vast and emphatic the *Śāstras* may be, they fail in their effort. The Guru (Dakshinamurti) is quiet, and Peace prevails in all. His Silence is more emphatic than all the *Śāstras* put together.

(Talks with Ramana Maharshi, 398)

Ekknath Swami, the Maharashtrian saint, in his commentary on Bhagavata has defined *Vedānta Pravachana* itself as *mauna* or Silence. What does this mean? As is so potently explained here in this present commentary, the words

uttered by a Master, an Illumined Being, emanate from and convey Silence alone. It has been just such a *Pravachana* that formed the basis of this work.

An exquisitely inspiring exposition on this *stotra* of Bhagavatpada was given by Acharya Sri Nochur Venkataraman, in 2009 at Bangalore, in Tamil. The power of those words was such that the very listening could push a mature seeker into the inner stream of *nididhyāsana*. A more or less spontaneous translation into English was undertaken, and that English rendition has been the primary impetus for bringing out this evocatively beautiful, sublimely meaningful, lucid and detailed commentary by Acharya.

Coming in the *Rishi parampara* of Arunachala Kshetra, Nochur Acharya has a special connection with this particular *stotra*. The primordial significance of this *stotra* and its association with Arunachala has already been elaborately revealed by him in his sacred work, *Atmatirtham, The Life and Teachings of Sankaracharya*.

To quote from Sopanam 39:

Acharya (Sankara) looked at the hill with wonder. Acharya said: 'The peace prevailing here is amazing.' Arunachala, which resembled Mahameru in shape, captivated Acharya's heart.

In this sacred place the hill itself is the *linga*... For a period, Acharya remained in profound mystic silence in *chinmudrā* here. Several disciples experienced the state of Samādhi by the very power of his *mauna*. After a while, Acharya said, 'The aspect of Siva as Dakshinamurti is very prominent in this sacred place. This hill itself is the form

of the great Silent Teacher—Dakshinamurti. The Lord as Dakshinamurti is ideal for worship, especially for renunciates—‘*upāsakānām yadupāsanīyaṃ upāttavāsaṃ vaṭasākhimūle*.’¹ The Lord, assuming a pure *sātvik* form, gave *Brahmopadeśa* to Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara by the power of *parāvāk* (the subtle-most realm of *śabda* which is of the nature of silence, which transcends idea, energy, light and sound.)²

...Even the silence of a *Jñāni* emanates *parāvāk*, so his is the uninterrupted eloquence. His silence is the song of the soul. Mature seekers relish his silence more than his words.

Sureswara requested Acharya to instruct him on the principle of Dakshinamurti. Acharya said, ‘Sureswara, Siva is generally known in the Vedas as Rudra, which is His formidable aspect. Sankara or Sadasiva is the most gentle form of the Lord. Sadasiva means ‘ever-auspicious’. Sadasiva is Brahman that is never contaminated by the triad—creation-sustenance-destruction. Sadasiva himself is Dakshinamurti...’

After this discourse, Acharya condensed the whole of it into a profound work, Dakshinamurti Stava, and gave it to Sureswara. The depth and grandeur of this hymn, resembling an Upanishad, astounded even a great scholar like Sureswaracharya. He later wrote a commentary on this work to which Acharya gave the name ‘Manasollasa’.

The verses of this *stotra* fall into a mystical cadence as they unfurl themselves, bringing to us a sense of awe and joy.

¹ Dakshinamurti Stotra - 1

² See pages 243-245 of *Atmatirtham* (English) for an elaborate explanation of this concept.

They transform our inner space, assuaging a deep thirst for gaining the ultimate, the sublime truth of our own Self. They offer, or rather proffer a Light unto the darkness that life appears to be. They lift us into high realms of imagination and make possible the contemplation of the divinity that we all essentially are.

Truth is One they say. But yet, to approach it with such intensity and a passion as is available here is the fundamental yearning of all those who truly seek—and this special quality is what draws and holds our attention. We are irresistibly drawn to delve deeper, to reflect further, to actualize our understanding better as we continue to read, reflect upon and sing these verses. That too is the Guru's instruction, the intention of the Lord. Therefore, it is a blessing to avail ourselves of this opportunity to do so here, in this hauntingly beautiful rendering.

These words of our Acharya are a beacon-light that bring instant illumination, that ring forth like temple-bells with the glory of this ancient wisdom. And they do so simply, easily and swiftly—erasing our ignorance, healing our sorrow forever with the brilliant authoritative strength of the Word.

**With obeisance and prostrations
at the feet of the Guru from a devotee**

ARUNACHALA SIVA

FLOWERS OFFERED AT THE FEET OF SIVA

Siva, as Dakshinamurti, imparted the knowledge of the Self—*Brahmavidyā*—to the four sons of Brahma through mystic silence. Out of boundless compassion to seekers, the Lord gave up the silence and came down in the form of the divine sage Sankara, walked the length and breadth of Bhāratavarsha, cleansing and purifying the land with the celestial Ganga of Self-knowledge cascading from the heights of his realisation. There is absolutely no doubt that the foundation of the Hindu religion, as it is today, is shaped by Sankaracharya. That rain-cloud of knowledge, brimming with the waters from the ever-blissful ocean of the Vedas, poured down nectarine Self-knowledge, with the thunderous declaration of the *Vedānta mahāvākya*, **"All this is indeed Brahman—*sarvaṃ khalvidam brahma*."** This is the underlying essence of all of Sankaracharya's works including the Dakshinamurti Stotra.

After Sankaracharya, the advent of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is one of the most significant epochs in the spiritual tradition of *Vedānta*. If the great *tapas* of Sankaracharya was to restore the rich Vedic tradition and to reinstate the lost glory of *Advaita Vedānta*—then it could be said that, Sri Ramana Bhagavan was the very living embodiment of *Advaita Jñāna*. "To abide in the Self is the highest accomplishment", was his teaching and it was in this state of transcendence that he remained at all times—be it day or night. To this day, even after his physical disappearance, this spiritual flame of Arunachala continues to inspire millions.

Silence is the true *upadeśa*. It is the perfect *upadeśa*. It is suited only for the most advanced seeker. The others are unable to draw full inspiration from it. Therefore they require words to explain the Truth... Sri Sankara, being the *avatār* of Siva, was full of compassion for fallen beings. He wanted all of them to realise their blissful Self. He could not reach them all with His Silence. So he composed the Dakshinamurti Stotra in the form of a hymn so that people might read it and understand the Truth.

I originally intended to write a commentary on it... (but) did not proceed with the work.

(Talks with Ramana Maharshi, 569)

It is our great fortune that this intent of Sri Bhagavan has fructified through Sri Acharya Venkataraman, who is simply known as Nochur Swami, and has come in the same *parampara*. He has blessed us with this profound commentary befitting the grandeur of this celestial hymn. Dakshinamurti Stotra is one of the most profound hymns composed by Sankaracharya. It conveys the *Advaita* in just ten verses. And who else to write a commentary for these ten profound verses revealing the nature of the Self other than a Master who is proficient in the *Vedānta Śāstras* and is established in the Self?

A sagely teacher who is a spark from the fire of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman, is an authentic Vedānta Acharya of the highest order whose knowledge on Vedic scriptures is unparalleled. Whether he speaks from the lofty peaks of *Advaita Jñāna* or from the valley of surrender or *bhakti*, it is simply soul-stirring! Language no barrier, we have seen even little children and animals revel in *ānanda*, enamoured by the Master's voice! His

words originate from *mauna*—Silence of the Heart—and are infused with the ineffable peace of *ātmānubhūti*.

We read in this commentary how Lord Dakshinamurti taught His disciples in Silence. It is not mere outward silence, it is uninterrupted eloquence; it is **transcendental language** or *samādhi bhāsha*. If so, what is the position of verbal teaching so much enforced and eulogised by the Upanishads? You find the answer for this doubt from the commentary thus: **“An enlightened Master’s words are also *mauna*. That language is like a mighty divine force which breaks down the seeker’s fortress of ignorance. It glides into the disciple’s heart, silently bestowing the greatest beatitude.”**

In this marvellous *bhashya*, Nochur Acharya has done the arduous task of revealing the inner essence of the profound verses of Dakshinamurti Stotra with absolute clarity. After a glorious introduction that sets the stage for the deluge of *Jñāna* that is to follow, the commentary on the first two *ślokas* elaborate on *viśvam* (world), our perception of it and the illusory nature of it. The emphatic declaration that this world is nothing but a cobweb woven by our mind, will surely make us take notice of our assumed dependency on the world! In the next six verses, there is a shift from the outer world to the inner world and the reader is led into the very womb of primordial Silence. After casting aside the lower levels of body, mind, intellect, void and others, we are introduced to the mystery lying unlocked in the state of deep sleep. And then, laying bare the ephemeral nature of this world and everything in it, we are brought face to face with ‘That’ which remains changeless behind them all. In the eighth chapter, we are made to question all relations that we hold dear in this world, thereby shattering

the delusory sand castles of cause-effect phenomena that feed our ego.

The underlying essence of all these verses is of course *Ātmavidyā*—and that has been brought about in the most convincing way. The profoundest part of the commentary lies where Dakshinamurti's *Chinmudrā* is explained with absolute clarity. If in verses one to eight, our attention is gradually taken away from the seen to the seer within—to Siva or the *Ātman*, in verse nine, it comes full circle as we are taken back to the world and shown that all that is seen is nothing but the *Ātman* alone—thus giving us a glorious glimpse of how a *Jñāni* views this world. For the one who has awakened to the Truth, the whole world shines as Siva, as Brahman! The concluding chapter inspires and urges us to contemplate on the precious knowledge made available and promises Supreme Beatitude as the fruit of contemplation. Thus Sankaracharya, the mighty Master, has woven this marvel of a hymn with threads of sparkling spiritual insights.

All this may seem quite a lot for just ten *ślokas*—and indeed it is! As it is with *Śruti*, it is impossible to unlock the meaning hidden in these verses without the help of a *Śrotriya Brahmanishṭha*. This lucid and profound commentary by this Acharya from Arunachala is indeed a boon to an aspirant. Every single word of these ten *ślokas* beautifully comes alive through his insightful interpretation.

There are several commentaries available for this *stotra* in Sanskrit, including the *vārttika*, *Manasollasa*, by Sureshwaracharya (direct disciple of Sri Sankara). In English too, there are many. There are several unique facets to this

commentary that make it stand apart from most of the other commentaries in English. A comparative study will make one notice the clarity of verse-meanings and the sheer beauty of poetic translations. The method of *Ātma-vichāra* or Self-enquiry is revealed in all profundity in this work. And as it is with Swami's expositions, this commentary too is a beautiful tapestry woven with the multi-hued threads of *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *tapas*. On the one hand, dismissing everything else, the Master points to the Self-effulgent Truth that shines within us always, and on the other hand, he gives utmost importance to the qualities of *śraddha*, *bhakti* and surrender to one's Guru and even declares that **"the easiest way to realisation is to trust the words of the Guru."** It is this sacred confluence of *jñāna* and *bhakti* that makes this work shine like a well-cut diamond.

Hitherto unknown insights often flash throughout this work. A good example is the fresh perspective on the fifth *śloka* (*dehaṃ prāṇamapi...*) which is a wonderful guidance for every seeker treading this path. Another unique facet is the great importance given to contemplation on *sushupti* or the deep sleep state. Listen to this emphatic declaration: **"By sleeping, of course one will not get Realisation, but by pondering over the experience of sleep, one will certainly get a glimpse of the bodiless, mindless state of Realisation."**

This majestic work is filled with many wonderful contemplation-worthy gems. It is truly an invaluable treasure not only for the distilled knowledge it contains, but also for the wondrous anecdotes from the lives of many saints including a few intimate incidents from Acharya's life itself; rare and heartening as they are, they are quite inspiring for a seeker. Reading these anecdotes, one feels as if one is sitting amongst

the audience while the talk is going on. The sheer poetic splendour of the words, a splendid sprinkling of soulful poems penned by the sagely teacher himself, and an exquisite collection of meditative verses from the Upanishads and other scriptures sown throughout this work make this an unmatched spiritual classic! Also included are some delightful and insightful stories that add simplistic beauty to this commentary.

For those longing for the Truth, this will surely prove to be a divine beacon of guidance, and one will see the *anugraha-tattva* hand-holding us in this sacred path to the portals of Realisation. Hence, it is not to be read casually, nor is it to be read in a hurry, but is to be taken in slowly with devotion, each word allowed to seep into the deepest cavern of the heart, from where it will surely emanate as one's own experience.

Balanced on the sturdy boat of faith and propelled by the oars of *bhakti* and *jñāna*, let us journey on this sacred river of spiritual experience, and glide into the Infinite ocean of Silence—*tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye*. Heartful prayers to Lord Dakshinamurti to bless us in this journey to His Kingdom of Eternal Silence.

Sri Ramana Maharshi Brahmavidyasrama

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

अ	a	hut	ट	ṭ	teach
आ	ā	father	ठ	ṭh	mutt
इ	i	sing	ड	ḍ	disc
ई	ī	feel	ढ	ḍh	childhood
उ	u	put	ण	ṇ	pond
ऊ	ū	cool	त	t	wealth
ऋ	r̥	wring, bridge	थ	th	thunder
लृ	l̥	girl	द	d	the
ए	e	medal	ध	dh	breathe-hard
ओ	o	hotel	न	n	not
औ	au	now	प	p	paper
अं	m̐	champ	फ	ph	uphill
अः	ḥ	ha	ब	b	balloon
ऽ	'	(avagraha)	भ	bh	abhor
क	k	kid	म	m	main
ख	kh	dark-horse	ह	h	happy
ग	g	garden	य	y	young
घ	gh	dog-house	र	r	run
ङ	ṅ	'ng' as in sing	ल	l	lamp
च	c	chain	व	v	vast
छ	ch	beach-holiday	श	ś	chandelier
ज	j	jug	ष	ṣ	should
झ	jh	sledge-hammer	स	s	sit
ञ	ñ	new or as in señaora			

Exceptions:

Although the IAST scheme has been used for transliterating *śloka*s, certain exceptions have been made while representing Sanskrit words within the commentary to ensure ease of readability of commonly used words. For example, *chit* is used instead of *cit*, *acharya* instead of *ācārya*, *sushupti* instead of *suṣṭi*, *śishya* instead of *śiṣya* and so on.



वटविटपिसमीपे शान्तपद्मासनस्था कलुषहरणदीक्षां स्यन्दमाना च मौनम् ।
अमरगुरुसुतांस्तानात्मतत्त्वं दिशन्ती जयति हृदयकञ्जे कापि कारुण्यमूर्तिः ॥

(SIVAPANCHARATNAM - 3, SRI RAMANACHARANATIRTHA NOCHUR VENKATARAMAN)

MEDITATION ŚLOKAS

मौनव्याख्या प्रकटित परब्रह्मतत्त्वं युवानं
वर्षिष्ठांते वसद् ऋषिगणैः आवृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः ।
आचार्येन्द्रं करकलित चिन्मुद्रमानन्दमूर्तिं
स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥ १ ॥

*maunavyākhyā prakaṭita parabrahmatattvaṃ yuvānaṃ
varṣiṣṭhāṃte vasad ṛṣigaṇaiḥ āvṛtaṃ brahmaniṣṭhaiḥ ।
ācāryendraṃ karakalita cinmudramānandamūrtiṃ
svātmārāmaṃ muditavadanaṃ dakṣiṇāmūrtimīḍe ॥1॥*

Lo the eloquence of Silence, the profound exposition of Brahman!
Dakshinamurti, the eternal young sage, His very face exudes joy,
He ever revels in His own Self, pure bliss is He,
Surrounded by illumined seers ever established in Brahman,
Through *Chinmudrā*, He transmits the supreme experience of
Brahman
To Him, all our soulful prostrations.

वटविटपिसमीपेभूमिभागे निषण्णं
सकलमुनिजनानां ज्ञानदातारमारात् ।
त्रिभुवनगुरुमीशं दक्षिणामूर्तिदेवं
जननमरणदुःखच्छेद दक्षं नमामि ॥ २ ॥

*vaṭa-viṭapi-samīpe bhūmibhāge niṣaṇṇaṃ
sakala-muni-janānāṃ jñāna-dātāramārāt ।
tribhuvana-gurumīśaṃ dakṣiṇāmūrti-devaṃ
janana-maraṇa-duḥkha-ccheda dakṣaṃ namāmi ॥2॥*

The mystical vision of the universal Master,
 Lord Dakshinamurti, primordial teacher of all seers,
 Dispeller of the illusion of misery of birth and death
 Unravelling in utter simplicity seated on bare ground
 Near the woods of *vaṭavṛkshas* (banyan trees).
 Lo! the grandeur of that vision!
 To that timeless Guru do we bow.

The Magnificent Vision under the Banyan Tree!

चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाः शिष्या गुरुर्युवा ।
 गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तुच्छिन्नसंशयाः ॥३॥

citram vaṭatarormūle vṛddhāḥ śiṣyā gururyuvā ।
gurostu maunaṁ vyākhyānaṁ śiṣyāstu-cchinnaśaṁśayāḥ ॥3॥

What a wonder is this magnificent vision!
 Beneath the banyan tree are the aged disciples
 And around a youthful Guru do they sit.
 He, the Master, teaches in profound silence!
 Lo! The doubts of the disciples are utterly dispelled!

निधये सर्वविद्यानां भिषजे भवरोगिणाम् ।
 गुरवे सर्वलोकानां दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥४॥

nidhaye sarvavidyānām bhiṣaje bhavarogiṇām ।
gurave sarvalokānām dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ ॥4॥

We worship the timeless universal teacher,
 In whom is hidden all knowledge that can bestow liberation,
 And who is the celestial herb and healer as well
 Of the miserable malady of 'becoming' (rebirth)
 Prostrations to Sri Dakshinamurti, the Universal Master,
 The treasure-house of all knowledge,
 The master healer of the malady of *saṁsāra*.

ॐ नमः प्रणवार्थाय शुद्धज्ञानैकमूर्तये ।

निर्मलाय प्रशान्ताय दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥५॥

om namaḥ praṇavārthāya śuddha-jñānaika-mūrtaye ।

nirmalāya praśāntāya dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ ॥5॥

Om, Prostrations to Lord Dakshinamurti,

The immaculate ever-peaceful being,

Who is of the form of pure *Jñāna*

And who is the experiential meaning

Of the mystical syllable, OM.

चिद्धनाय महेशाय वटमूलनिवासिने ।

सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥ ६ ॥

cidghanāya maheśāya vaṭamūla-nivāsine ।

saccidānandarūpāya dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ ॥6॥

The Supreme God who is solidified pure Awareness

Stays in repose under the banyan tree

Existence-Consciousness and Bliss is He

To Him, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this salutation.

ईश्वरो गुरुरात्मेति मूर्तिभेदविभागिने ।

व्योमवद्व्याप्तदेहाय दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥ ७ ॥

īśvaro gururātmēti mūrti-bheda-vibhāgine ।

vyomavad-vyāpta-dehāya dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ ॥7॥

The south-faced one, Dakshinamurti, is verily the Infinite Being

His body is omnipresent like the space

He alone is God, *Īśvara*

He alone is Guru, the Supreme Teacher

He alone shines forth as the Self, the *Ātman*.



INTRODUCTION

प्रकाशात्मिकया शक्त्या प्रकाशानां प्रभाकरः ।

प्रकाशयति यो विश्वं प्रकाशोऽयं प्रकाशताम् ॥

(Manasollasa 10.27)

Let the effulgence that illumines this universe and all the visible lights with its power of luminosity shine forth in our hearts.

परमाद्वैतविज्ञानं कृपया वै ददाति यः ।

सोऽयं गुरुवरस्साक्षाच्छिव एव न संशयः ॥

(Sutasamhita, Brahma Gita 44)

That adorable Guru, who is capable of bestowing supreme *Advaita Jñāna* by His sheer Grace, is none other than Siva.

Why not Abide in Peace?

Once, an incident took place in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's presence. A devotee visited Bhagavan, and offering a basket laden with fruits, prostrated. He then asked the Sage, "In *satsaṅg* and in Guru's presence, we gain peace; but why does it disappear afterwards?" Bhagavan did not reply immediately, but simply remained quiet, immersed in *samādhi* with unwinking open eyes. A tremendous upsurge of energy was felt. A *dhārā*—a mystical current of pure Self-awareness, pervaded all around. Devotees sat there bathed in that pure water of Spirit. While all were seated thus, under the spell of that profound Silence, a monkey entered the hall. As all were sitting still, it walked in boldly, and

seeing the basket, took hold of one of the fruits. While doing so, it glanced up at Maharshi's face; Maharshi's gaze was also focused on the monkey. Then, the monkey became completely still as if in a painting—not stirring even a bit. Those witnessing the scene were incredulous, as that which is often quoted as an example for unruliness, stayed still for almost seven to eight minutes! After some time, the spell broke and then, of course as was its nature, the monkey again took hold of the fruit and started looking around. With a smile, Bhagavan remarked: “Ey, why don't you stay as you were? What kingdom are you planning to conquer?”

“Why not abide in that peace? What great attainment awaits you that you again need to move out of your inherent Peace?”—this question or remark from the Sage is a teaching for all, including the devotee who had initially asked the question. Even though we get a glimpse of this peace during *satsaṅg* or while in meditation, why do we lose it later? It is because, when we board the flight of worldly ambitions, they acquire such greater momentum that, we are estranged from our real nature. Achievements gain more importance than peace.

Nature of the Ātman (Self)

‘*śānto yaṃ ātmā*. This Ātman is Peace’—is the declaration of *Śruti*. Peace is the very nature of the Self. When mind becomes still, *śānti* or peace is revealed. When mind becomes distracted, the peace of the inner Self is not

felt very clearly. When something helps the mind to touch the cool pool of peace within, we mistake that ‘something’ to be the cause of Peace. Peace, however, does not arise from any outside cause. Peace is Ātman itself—its very nature. The Self is of the nature of pure Experience—*anubhūti swarūpa*. The peace of the Self can never be taken away from us. All of us occasionally experience that peace in our lives, so to say, in between two disturbances. But that intermission soon gives way to thoughts. As clouds that cover the sky, thoughts overcast that inner peace. When the inner quietude exists, we hardly recognise its value and we ourselves disturb it by worldly activities that are deeply involving—and this generates attachment and aversion within us. We ourselves spoil that Peace due to our delusion that there is something to be achieved through effort.

Anugraha Tattva

In order to deal with the world, we must necessarily have likes and dislikes, and a sense of doership and enjoyership. Worldly activity cannot be undertaken without these four. By ‘world’ what is implied is ‘*rāga-dveṣa-kartṛtva-bhokṛtva rūpaṃ jagat*—likes, dislikes, doership and enjoyership taken form is the world.’ I must have either a like or a dislike to deal with another, and I must possess doership and enjoyership in order to act in the world. When the mind is projected, it comes forth with these four aspects, and they come accompanied by bondage. When the mind

subsides, it subsides along with these four; then the inherent contentment of our real nature (*swarūpa sukha*) shines forth and the peace of the Self reveals itself. So, quietude of the mind is the greatest yoga—'*paro hi yogo manasaḥ samādhiḥ*'.³ All activity, whether it be worldly, spiritual or ritualistic (*vedic*), takes place in the realm of *Śakti*. In the plane of *Śakti*, there is something called *pañcha-kṛtyā*—*sṛshṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (sustenance), *saṃhāra* (destruction), *tirodhāna* (veiling or forgetting), and *anugraha* (Grace or Self-knowledge).

सृष्टिकर्त्री ब्रह्मरूपा गोप्त्री गोविन्दरूपिणी ॥

संहारिणी रुद्ररूपा तिरोधान-करीश्वरी ।

सदाशिवाऽनुग्रहदा पञ्चकृत्य-परायणा ॥

(Lalita Sahasranama 63, 64)

These powers are at work incessantly. Even within the body of a tiny amoeba, these powers are active at all times. In spiritual quest, it is the fifth principle that matters the most. It is *Anugraha* that reveals the *Sādāśiva tattva* or *Guru tattva*.

Seekers often have a doubt: "How and where will I find a Guru? How would I recognise him?" The truth is, one need not search for a Guru at all! For a mature seeker, the fifth principle of *anugraha* or Grace will bring about the contact with the spiritual preceptor—the Guru. When a flower

³ Srimad Bhagavata 11.23.45

blooms, a honeybee is attracted towards it, and sometimes, it flies in even from a very far off place. Just as such a law operates in nature, a mature seeker will be led to the presence of an Awakened Being. That Guru may appear in a human form or as a divine being—a *vibhūti*. For many saints, their Guru was not a person, but a special divine manifestation. This *anugraha tattva* exists in nature just like the other four *pañcha-kṛtyās*, but will be revealed only to a mature seeker. This *anugraha tattva* is Dakshinamurti.

Ambā or Divine Mother is described in Lalita Sahasranama as *dakṣiṇamūrti rūpiṇī*. That is her pure form—the form of *Chit* (Consciousness). When we think of Devi—the Divine Mother, a female form is what will come to our mind; but if we think of Her as *Śakti*, as the power of *Īśvara*, then we will be able to conceive Her real nature. All aspects of nature, whether male or female, are Her manifestations alone. The extremely subtle and mysterious form of that *Śakti* is expressed by the name: '*cidagni-kuṇḍa-sambhūtā*' in Lalita Sahasranama; it is the power which manifests as the fire of *jñāna* that blazes forth in the heart due to the churning between the enlightened Guru's words and the *śraddhā*-distilled mind of the earnest disciple.

The operation of this force has a deep impact on the seeker. In the mighty presence of a knower of *Brahman*, a centre starts working within us without our knowledge. A strange fascination will arise in the mind to sink deep into the Heart-centre—into the state of *Samādhi*. The operation

of this force is what is known as *Chit-Śakti*. It is unlike any other worldly attraction. Normally, what is it that attracts us in the world? Seeing things with the eyes, hearing sounds with the ears, touching things by means of the skin and so on. Spiritual attraction is not the same as these worldly sensations; it is something unworldly, other-worldly. It is not an attraction which is of the plane of the mind. This *Chit-Śakti* is what is referred to as *Kṛpā* (Grace). *Kṛpā* is the fundamental cause for a person attaining the supreme *Advaita Jñāna*.

परमाद्वैतविज्ञानं कृपया वै ददाति यः ।

सोऽयं गुरुवरस्साक्षाच्छिव एव न संशयः ॥

(Sutasamhita, Brahma Gita 44)

This is emphasised in the above-mentioned verse of Sutasamhita. It describes the transmitting of *Advaita Jñāna* by means of *Kṛpā*. When a *śishya* attains *Advaita Jñāna* by such *Kṛpā* from a Guru, that is, when a person's *ajñāna* is removed due to *Śakti-pāta*—the instantaneous experience of the power of Grace—and he gains *pratyabhijñā* of the Self, that Guru is Dakshinamurti. As a direct disciple, Sureshwara must have seen this power of Grace being active in the mighty presence of Acharya Sankara.

The Story of Dakshinamurti

The story of Dakshinamurti as told by Ramana Bhagavan is slightly different from the widely known version. It's quite a noteworthy incident too. One day, a devotee

asked Maharshi about Dakshinamurti. Muruganar, one of Maharshi's great devotees, was also present there at that time.

Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara—the firstborn immaculate beings were great renunciates, and they possessed remarkable *vairāgya* (dispassion) too. Brahma had made them manifest in order to carry out further creation; but they declined due to their *viveka* (inherent intelligence or discrimination). They wished to get *upadeśa* (guidance) from their father Brahma himself. However, they were not satisfied to accept him as their Guru as they saw him involved in creation and in other pleasures. The dispassionate Kumaras were not impressed with this.

Hidden in their minds, the Kumaras, just like everyone else, had their own conditions about whom they could accept as their Guru. And so, continuing their search, they proceeded to Vaikunta to request Vishnu to be their Guru. There, Vishnu was found reclining very comfortably on the serpent bed, with Mahalakshmi massaging his legs. Dissatisfied, they continued their search. Upon reaching Kailash, where they expected Siva to be in *tapas*, they found him in the form of Ardhanarisvara, having given half his body to his consort, Parvati. Utterly disappointed, they went away wondering who would give them *upadeśa*. As they left, Divine Mother Parvati, who is the very personification of *karuṇāśakti* (compassion), urged Siva not to expect the seekers to understand his stature, but to shower his grace on

them by appearing in a manner which would satisfy them. Heeding to the wise words of the Divine Mother, the great God Mahadeva appeared in all his radiance as a youth of sixteen seated under a *Vaṭavṛksha*.

When the four—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara—beheld His radiant form, they were at once convinced that here is the Master! Here the story deviates from the well-known version. They requested Him for *upadeśa* and then Dakshinamurti began teaching them in the traditional manner—'*paripraśnena sevayā*'.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ (Bhagavad Gita 4.34)

Know that by prostration, by enquiry and by service, the wise who have realised the Truth will instruct thee in (that) knowledge.

In this way, He taught them every day for one full year. But after each day, they would return to Him with a doubt. Each teaching would lead to fresh doubts. This led to a never ending cycle of questions - answers - questions, just as those who read books find new doubts arising hitherto unknown. In this way, they kept on having doubts. Thus, they continued to listen to the teaching from Dakshinamurti for a full year and finally reached the saturation point—their inquisitiveness vanished.

One day they sat before the Lord as usual. That day Paramesvara did not speak at all; He remained absolutely

quiet—in *mauna*. They hoped that He would speak and continued to wait. Guru in *mauna*, *śishyas* too in *mauna*—*citraṃ vaṭatarormūle vṛddhāḥ śiṣyā gururyuvā gurostu maunaṃ vyākhyānaṃ śiṣyāstucchinnaśaṃsayāḥ*. Guru continued His *mauna*, and the *śishyas* soon came under its spell and their doubts were utterly dispelled.

When Maharshi finished narrating this story, Muruganar asked, “Bhagavan! We have not heard the story told this way! What we have heard is that the Kumaras went seeking *upadeśa* and Dakshinamurti stayed in *mauna*, and all their doubts got dispelled. We have never heard that He gave *upadeśa* for an entire year in the traditional manner?” To this, Ramana Bhagavan said, “That is the way it happened, *oy!*” Moved to tears, Muruganar replied: “Yes, yes, of course only Dakshinamurti would know!”

The Timeless Night of *Śivarātri*

Mauna means *parāvāk*—the fourth realm of sound. Is it possible to make one understand *Brahmavidyā* through *mauna*? If It can be known by speech, then why not through *mauna*? In verbal teaching, *Ātmānubhūti* (Self-experience) has to be transformed into *paśyantī vāk*, *madhyamā vāk* and then finally into *vaikharī vāk*. By doing so, it becomes very gross and loses much of its potency. The great-great-grandfather of speech is this *mauna*—the ‘source-power’! It is from there that we descend to the plane of speech. (*parā* is pure essence of knowledge, *paśyantī* is recognisable

movement of vague ideas, *madhyamā* is mental formation of words, and *vaikharī* is verbal expression.)

This incredible power of *mauna* was demonstrated in an incident that unfolded in the presence of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It has been recorded by a devotee thus: 'It was a *Śivarātri* day. The evening worship at the Mother's shrine was over. Devotees had their dinner with Sri Bhagavan, who was now on his seat, with the devotees at his feet sitting around him. At 8 p.m. one of the *sādhus* stood up, did *praṇām* (offered obeisance), and with folded hands prayed: "Today is *Śivarātri* day; we would be highly blessed by Sri Bhagavan expounding to us the meaning of the Hymn to Dakshinamurti." Bhagavan said, "Yes, sit down." The *sādhū* sat, and all eagerly looked at Bhagavan and Bhagavan looked at them. Bhagavan sat and sat in his usual pose, no, poise. No words, no movement, and all was stillness! He sat still, and all sat still, waiting. The clock went on striking, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, one, two and three. Bhagavan sat and they sat. Stillness, calmness, motionlessness—not conscious of the body, of space or time.

Thus, eight hours were passed in Peace, in Silence, in Being, as it is. Thus was the Divine Reality taught through the speech of Silence by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Dakshinamurti. At the stroke of 4 a.m. Sri Bhagavan quietly said: "And now have you known the essence of the Dakshinamurti Hymn?"

All the devotees stood and prostrated to the holy form of the Guru in the ecstasy of their Being.⁴

***Samādhi Bhāshā*—Wordless Speech of the Master**

In *Ubhayalingadhikarana Bhashya* of *Brahma Sutra*, Sankaracharya narrates the following anecdote of a Master and a disciple thus. Bashkali, the seeker went to Badhwa the Acharya and requested for *Brahma Upadeśa*. As instructed by the Guru, Bashkali stayed with the Guru for one year. Throughout this time, the Guru never spoke. One day, the *śishya* said, “You have not given me any *upadeśa*?” Then the Guru replied, “*brūmaḥ khalu tvaṃ tu na vijānāsi*—I have been incessantly teaching you, but you did not receive it!”

When communication is through words, there has to be a beginning and an end. But *mauna* is uninterrupted eloquence—there is no end to this communication. All creatures other than human beings are familiar with such language. Without asking anybody for directions, without any help from Google, a bird flies from one continent to another guided by the silent inner voice. *Mauna pravachana*—silent exposition, is more eloquent than speech. If one can understand it, it is absolute revelation. ‘*avacanaiva brahma provāca*⁵—the teacher wordlessly spoke Brahman!’

⁴ At the feet of Bhagavan

⁵ *Brahma Sutra Bhashya* 3.2.17

In Eknathi Bhagavata, Eknath Swami says, ‘*Vedānta pravachana* itself is *mauna*.’ An Enlightened Master’s words are also *mauna*. A language that does not have the bumps of ‘I’, ‘you’, and ‘he’, and which conveys ‘THAT’ is *mauna*. The language that conveys the transcendental is called *Samādhi bhāshā*. *Mauna* is that *Samādhi bhāshā*.

‘*bhāṣārūpā brhatsenā bhāvābhāva-vivarjitā*’, says Lalita Sahasranama. It means that the *śakti* that conveys the experience of Siva is of the nature of a transcendental language. That language is like a mighty divine force which breaks down the seeker’s fortress of ignorance. It neither contains any idea (*bhāva*), nor does it convey nothingness (*abhāva*). ‘*citiḥ tatpada-lakṣyārthā cidekarasa-rūpiṇī*’, says Lalita Sahasranama. It is pure Awareness—*Chitiḥ*, which is the essential meaning of the ‘TAT’ in the *mahāvākya* ‘TATTVAMASI’. It is the bliss of pure Awareness. It glides into the disciple’s heart, silently bestowing the greatest beatitude—‘*rahastarpaṇa-tarpitā*’.⁶

From Knowledge to Realisation

After churning it, curd is allowed to stay for a while for butter to emerge. In this way, after *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, a period of restfulness is necessary. Once all is done, simply **stay still**. Do not disturb. Allow the cream of Self-experience to surface. ‘*pāṇḍityaṃ nirvidya bālyena*

⁶ Lalita Sahasranama 83

*tiṣṭhāset*⁷—after removing ignorance through knowledge, then leave aside even the *saṃskāra* (residue) of that knowledge and be like a child. Live with the strength of the Knowledge. Slowly and steadily, get rid of all the movements, mental habits from within, and learn to live in *mauna*. Remain in that *mauna* for a long period. Then, renouncing both *mauna* and *non-mauna*, move about as a Brāhmaṇa—an Enlightened Being!

For infusing that *mauna* into the Heart, one needs a *muni* who is in that state. Once, a young *sanyāsī*, who had completed learning *Vedānta-śāstras* in the traditional way, came to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi expecting further guidance in *nididhyāsana*. Bhagavan was on his couch reading something then. As the *sanyāsī* entered the hall with deep yearning, there was a sudden transfiguration in the great Master. He just dropped the book from his hands and looked straight at the *sādhū*. Maharshi's body was still as a statue. Slowly the *sādhū* too became still, absorbing the rain of mystic silence. Moments rolled into hours—the mighty Master and the wonderful seeker continued to sit still. After three hours, the blessed monk stood up with a face lit up with the brilliance of *Brahmajñāna* and left the place without uttering a single word.

⁷ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.5.1

Mauna has a fragrance of its own. It blooms when thoughts are hushed. Waves of *mauna* emanate from such a sage and purify the thought-infected atmosphere around him. When thoughts cease, a deep peace arises; then one realises how much destruction and pollution have been created by thoughts. In a place that has been sanctified by the presence of a yogi, even the walls and the floor will continue to exude the fragrance of his *samādhi* state. When you enter such a place even after hundreds of years, that *mauna* can be smelt there.

The Silent Teacher Spoke

Words often lead to doubts and misapprehensions even, and verbal guidance often proves inadequate. In order to cool the mind and to quieten the brain, the great teacher Siva resorted to *mauna*. Divine Sages like Sanaka were receptive to that *mauna* and it erased their *ajñāna*. But for the majority of seekers, verbal clarity is necessary as a prelude to *samādhi* experience. Hence, the same Lord descended as Acharya Sankara. The same *upadeśa* that was transmitted by Lord Dakshinamurti through silence, was given to us by Bhagavatpada through words. Acharya's Dakshinamurti Stotra has cascaded from the celestial heights as the commentary for His own divine silence.

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितान् आत्मविद्योपदेशैः
 त्रातुम् लोकान् भवदवशिखातापपापच्यमानान् ।
 मुक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनो मूलतो निष्पतन्ती
 शंभोर्मूर्तिः चरति भुवने शंकराचार्यरूपा ॥

(Madhaviya Sankaravijaya Chp2)

Fallen into the abysmal depths of blinding ignorance!
 Burnt and roasted in the fire of misery!
 Seeing us thus, the great Being seated in *mauna*
 In the woods of the sacred *vaṭa*, gave up His silence,
 Cascaded from the transcendental to the terrestrial
 Like the celestial water of yore—*ĀkāśaGangā*,
 Moves about in the world transmitting Self-knowledge
 As the all-renouncing teacher, Acharya Sankara!

In Yoga Vasishtha, Vasishtha says that the Guru gives the same *upadeśa* to all:

उपदेशक्रमो राम व्यवस्थामात्रपालनम् ।
 ज्ञप्तेस्तु कारणं शुद्धा शिष्यप्रज्ञैव केवला ॥ (Yoga Vasishtha Sara 11)
 O Rama! The method of teaching by a Master is just a
 ritual of the tradition. The chief cause for Realisation is
 the awareness of the disciple.

Listening, grasping and absorbing it directly, depends
 on the ripeness of the listener. Using the words of the
 Master as a vehicle, he comprehends the *mauna* within and
 grasps his own *swarūpa*. In the case of a very mature seeker,
 the words of an enlightened being often reveal the
 unknowable and makes it more intimate than the known.

The *lakshyārtha* or the implied meaning of the Upanishads, at times, flashes forth in the sacred collision between the words of the Master and the intellect of the disciple.

Essence of *Vedānta*

Bhagavatpada has given us three different *stotras* on Dakshinamurti. The most well-known among these is the hymn which begins with *viśvaṃ darpaṇadṛśyamānanagarī*. This Dakshinamurti Stotra does not describe the form of Dakshinamurti as other hymns addressed to Gods do. Although this is called a hymn—a *stotra*, it contains much more by way of teaching. A *namaskāra* is offered to Lord Dakshinamurti in each verse, and that is the only *stotra* part of it. In addition to that, the essence of the entire *Vedānta śāstra* has been fully distilled and made available in this composition. The Dakshinamurti Stotra, as composed by Bhagavatpada, illumines the pure knowledge-form of Dakshinamurti. Dakshinamurti *tattva* (principle) or the entire *Vedānta tattva* has been condensed in this *stotra* by Sri Acharya. This *stotra* may thus be termed an Upanishad—'Dakshinamurti Upanishad'.

Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami once said that *prakaraṇa granthas* alone are enough for a very mature seeker. When a person seeks Experience alone and is not interested in discussions and debates, then a text such as Vivekachudamani will do. For a highly mature seeker, this

Dakshinamurti Stotra is enough, as he only needs a suggestion to wake up.

अशरीरं शरीरेष्वनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥

(Kathopanishad 1.2.22)

When you know the Self, which inhabits the transient body, as absolutely Whole and Omnipresent, and recognise its bodiless nature, then you transcend sorrow.

To realise this Ātman, we need the teaching (*bodhana*) from one who already carries the radiance of that knowledge in his very being. Dakshinamurti is the supreme source of this teaching. Every teacher is a spark, and He is the fire itself, and of course a spark is nothing but fire!

The One Facing Death

The name ‘Dakshinamurti’ generally means the form of the Lord who faces south. We can see this form of Siva in most of the Siva temples; He is seen seated facing south (*dakṣiṇādik*), holding the *Chin-mudrā*. Traditionally, the southern direction is associated with Yama, the god of death. That is the reason why the orthodox do not prefer to sit facing south. However, whoever dares to face death, is the one who shall find *amṛtānubhava* (immortality). One has to encounter death and explore into it. In Kathopanishad, the daring boy Nachiketas went to the world of death and asked Yama, “Who are you?”—that is, what is the secret of death?

Yama pleaded, "Please do not ask me that question; do not compel me to tell you. Leave aside that question." The boy, with deep devotion, implored the great teacher and unlocked the portal of immortal wisdom. Why is Dakshinamurti facing south? For when we face death, we shall come to know that there is in fact no death at all! However, *māyā* is withholding this secret from us; she is not allowing us to open the chamber of existence and look inside.

A person was walking holding a bag close to his chest, and many followed him out of curiosity, wondering, 'What does it contain, what does it contain?' He turned the bag inside out revealing that there was nothing inside! In the same way, we are full of fear of the unknown, and hence we fear death. Guru comes to reveal that there is no death.

What we call as death is the disappearance of a mere form. When we investigate closely, we find that there is indeed no death! Something that no one has ever experienced has been given the name 'Death'. Even the dead body is seen only by others. If by death, we mean 'change', then we have already undergone many deaths in the course of our life. Our childhood body simply does not exist now—that body is gone now. So, if death means change it cannot touch the Self. One has to face death to know the deathless Self. Thus, by facing south, Lord Dakshinamurti, the great teacher is facing Death.

Form of Pure Awareness

शेमुषी दक्षिणा प्रोक्ता सा यस्याभीक्षणे मुखम् ।

दक्षिणाभिमुखः प्रोक्तः शिवोऽसौ ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥

(Dakshinamurtyupanishad 31)

‘Intelligence’ is known as *dakshina*. One whose face is always facing that, or one whose form is intelligence, is spoken as Siva in the form of Dakshinamurti, by knowers of Brahman.

‘*Dakshina*’ also means pure awareness, *Chit-Śakti*. The one who is of the form of *Chit-Sakti* Himself is Dakshinamurti. In fact, He is the formless one—*Dakshina amūrti*. For those who are interested solely in *Jñāna*, their *antaryāmi* (Inner Being) appears to them in the form of Dakshinamurti—as a pure manifestation of Grace! ‘*kṛpāviśeṣāt kṛta saṁnidhānaḥ*’, says Acharya in another *stava* on Dakshinamurti. For those seekers with no other desires whatsoever, this principle, the Truth of Dakshinamurti will be revealed.

Hṛdaya Sthānam

There is also another reason for the name Dakshinamurti. He resides in the *dakshina vakshaḥsthala*—the Heart on the right side. ‘*Dakshina*’ also means right-side as opposed to ‘*vāma*’ which is the left-side. While the blood pumping heart on the left-side is known clinically, the spiritual heart—the realm of Self experience, which is situated on the right-side, is known only through yogic

vision. Even so, everyone has a vague intuition about this centre on the right-side. When we refer to ourselves, do we not instinctively point to the right-side of our chest? No one points to the left-side to refer to themselves! From a child to everyone in the world, it is the right-side of the chest that they instinctively point to when they say 'I'—no one touches their head, or leg or the stomach while referring to the 'I'. In fact, we painstakingly turn our hand around one hundred and eighty degrees and point to the right-side of the chest when we say 'I'. It is an intuitive reflex action.

Narayana Sukta in the Yajurveda speaks about this Heart as the abode of Paramātmā. This is the mystical heart-centre. This *Hṛdaya sthānam* is spiritually located on the right-side just below the chest and above the navel by two-finger-width says Yoga Vasishtha. This is the seat of Dakshinamurti.

Embodiment of Compassion

'*Dakṣiṇa*' also means compassion. Dakshinamurti is the one who is of the form of pure compassion. '*rudra yatte dakṣiṇam mukham*'⁸—O Rudra! Look upon me with that compassionate face of yours. '*yā te rudra śivā tanūḥ*'⁹—the most auspicious body of Siva, Rudra. Do not look at me with the *vāma mukham*—the terrible left-side face. Bhagavān is

⁸ Swetaswataropaniṣad 21

⁹ Sri Rudram

both *ugra* (terrible) and compassionate. *mṛtyu* (death) and *amṛta* (immortality) are the two sides of His face. That *Amritaswarūpa-mūrti* is Dakshinamurti.

See Bhagavatpada's description of that compassionate *mūrti*...

कलाभिरिन्दोरिव कल्पिताङ्गं मुक्ताकलापैरिव बद्धमूर्तिम् ।

आलोकये देशिकमप्रमेयमनाद्यविद्यातिमिरप्रभातम् ॥

(Dakshinamurti Stotra 6)

Behold the Master of immeasurable glory!

The comely full moon—that silvery disk of effulgence,

A mere glance cools our thought-tortured brains!

Siva shines, as if His body is made of moonlight!

Or a dazzling cluster of pearls!

His mere presence is the splendorous sun of *Jñāna*

Darkness of beginningless ignorance is dispelled.

Acharya has given us this treasure of a verse out of his immense compassion. By a mere reading of this verse, one gets the vision of Siva.

Guru, Śishya and Upadeśa

Many modern seekers often wonder—"Why do we require a Guru? What is the need for us to surrender to someone like us?" This is an extremely delicate fact to understand. One cannot attain *Jñāna* without Guru; however, one need not go in search of a Guru either. This is

the thing. If you seek, you may end up with someone who has not transcended the limitations himself.

जनो जनस्यादिशतेऽसतीं मर्तिं यया प्रपद्येत दुरत्ययं तमः ।

(Srimad Bhagavata 8.24.511)

A person who does not know, imparts his own ignorance to another. By this way one gets trapped in unassailable darkness.

This is the problem. Enlightened sages are generally disinclined to take on the role of a Guru; nor do they generally claim any as their *śishyas*. For them, everyone is the ever-perfect Ātman. If they admit guruhood they would slip into otherness or *anyabhāva*, which they always carefully avoid. In the Enlightened One we can see the *Guru-tattva* revealed, but the Guru beholds only the Self in the *śishya*. This is the oneness of his vision. So, the *śishya* has to take this sacred knowledge from him. Like calves do to the mother-cow, we, with our whole being, have to hit the udder of *jñāna* in the Guru's heart in order to taste the milk of fulfilment. The seeker must immerse himself in the Knowledge with his dedicated *śraddhā*, *bhakti* and *dhyānayoga*.

When it comes to imparting worldly knowledge or the knowledge of the scriptures, one can take on teacherhood. One can say, "I am teaching him *veda*, *śāstra*, music or dance." All this is fine. There is a teacher-taught difference in this situation. However, in the plane of Self-Experience

(*anubhūti*), as long as an Acharya thinks that he is a Guru and the other a *śishya*, the seeker will not gain Self-Experience. Only when the Guru does not possess a limited sense of 'I' and does not sense any difference between himself and the *śishya*, transmission of this awareness of oneness is possible. The state where he never even feels that there are two—in that state, if he merely looks at the *śishya* once, the fire of *Jñāna* will be lit within the *śishya*. This is called *swarūpa dīkshā*. *swarūpa dīkshā*, *nyāna dīkshā* are all the same. Remaining in the *Swarūpa*, when Guru looks at the *śishya* with the *bhāva*, "He and I are one", the *śishya* will get the *anubhava*. This oneness in Guru is Grace or compassion and the fruit expresses in the disciple as *Gurubhakti*.

अहं शिष्यवदाभामि ह्ययं लोकत्रयाश्रयः ।

अहं कालत्रयातीत अहं वेदैरुपासितः ॥

(Tejobindu Upanishad 3.18)

'*ahaṃ śiṣyavadābhāmi*—I myself am appearing in the form of the disciple', is the feeling or experience of the Master. If the Guru is a *swarūpa-nishṭha* and the *śishya* too beholds the Guru with *bhakti*, then too the fire will catch. This is what it is. It is unlike learning any other science. Here, these two things are very important—Guru should be in the state of seeing no difference and the disciple sees God in the Master—then the *śishya* too will be bestowed with the same state of no-otherness of the Guru. This is Advaita. 'No-otherness' is the precise translation of Advaita.

Heart-to-Heart Transmission through *Kṛpā* (Grace)

The immense power employed by the Realised Master to abide ever naturally in the Self, will always be whirling around him with the momentum of his *tapas*. With this power, he can breathe into the seeker the *ichchā-śakti*—an indomitable will to withdraw oneself from the circumference to the centre, the Heart. This power gives a graceful inward push to the mind and subsumes the thought-flow into the inner pool of quietude. This *bhāva maṇḍala* of a *muni* or a *yogī* is the force which transmits the absolute knowledge to mature seekers. It travels from Heart to Heart on its own—this is the power of *mauna*. That *upāsana*—that *ātma-vidyā* or *hṛdaya-vidyā*—travels from the mighty Master to the mature disciple through the mystic vehicle of *Chit-Śakti*.

The current of initiatory energy that flows from a *Jñāni* is the power of his *Jñāna-tapas*. Like a livewire, it carries the seeds of *upāsana* and the blaze of Realisation in its being. It is so powerful that one need not be told how to use it—it just walks into you gracefully! Soon you become aware of the immense *tapas* that is ablaze in the deepest cavern of your heart—the *tapas* of effortless abidance in the Self.

When *Jñāna* flashes in one stroke, it is called *pratyabhijñā*. It may come in a moment due to the power of *Kṛpā* or it may come after a lot of effort. We can never predict when it may happen—attention may turn inwards at any time. How long does it take to see the sun? Once you

see it, you've seen it, haven't you? But do you look at the sun every morning? Just because it is there shining does not necessarily mean that we notice it. In the same way, we often fail to notice that which is constantly present. It is *Kṛpā* that turns our attention towards *Swarūpa*.

The Glorious *Guru-tattva*

Our attention irresistibly goes outwards to various objects through the senses. Using the mind as the bow, *māyā* directs her arrows of desires outwards through the five senses. This is described in *Lalita Sahasranama* as '*manorūpekṣu-kodaṇḍā pañcatanmātra-sāyakā*.' In order to direct our attention inwards, the Inner One (*antaryāmi*) must appear in some special form—'*avatīrno'si bhagavan sveccho-pātta- prthagvapuḥ*.'¹⁰ He appears outside and tells us to look within, and we must direct our attention inwards and make it stay there—'*antarmukha samārādhyā bahirmukha sudurlabhā*.'¹¹ The Guru comes armed with the bow of Veda and the arrow of *Mahāvākya* and tells us, "Look within, see what lies within you! Behold, YOU ARE THAT."

Rudra's form with the bow and arrow is considered the most auspicious.

यात इषुः शिवतमा शिवं बभूव ते धनुः ।

शिवा शरव्या या तव तया नो रुद्र मृडय ॥ (Sri Rudram 1-2)

¹⁰ *Srimad Bhagavata* 11.11.28

¹¹ *Lalita Sahasranama* 162

That arrow of Thine is the most auspicious
 Thy bow, O Lord, bestows supreme beatitude
 Thy quiver is also the abode of release
 With these, O Rudra protect us.

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।

(Mundakopaniṣad 2.2.4)

OM is the bow and the *jīva bhāva* or mind is the arrow.
 With that He hits the target, Brahman, perfectly.

Once we gain the experience of the Self, we lose the delusion that Guru is a person. An inspiring incident from the life of the great *guru-bhakta* Eknath illustrates this. Once, as Eknath Swami was speaking on Srimad Bhagavata, he received the news that his Guru, Janardhana Swami, had left the body. Eknath Swami continued the exposition without the slightest reaction. It was very astonishing for all as they had not seen anyone with greater *guru-bhakti* than Eknath Swami, and this non-reaction from him was most unexpected. Later, when someone asked him how he remained unaffected even after hearing the news of his beloved Guru's death, he replied, "Is Guru something that dies?"

A Guru who dies and a *śiṣhya* who mourns—such a Guru is neither a Guru, nor is that *śiṣhya* a *śiṣhya*!

If we misapprehend the body as the Guru, then what permanence will it have? That will also disappear like everything else. In fact, many who lived with saints got

confused during their Guru's last days, when they saw their Guru suffering on account of bodily afflictions. 'Why, he is also just like us!' was their shocking revelation. If we see the Guru as body, it may seem as if they are more imperfect than us—sometimes they are in poorer health and often seem to suffer more than us, and old age too affects them as it affects all. But once we have understood the *Guru Tattva*, then we will know that Guru is not a person. However, the form of the Guru is a portal to the *Guru Tattva*. That principle or *tattva* will appear before us in some form or the other—this must necessarily happen if one is a sincere seeker. When it is available, we feel a sense of gratitude and love towards that form. The principle that operates through the form of the Guru is Dakshinamurti.

A seeker who is neither interested in action nor in pleasures is a *Yogārūḍha*. In the presence of mighty spiritual beings, the ability to turn within will be spontaneously set in motion for those in the *Yogārūḍha-state*. Even without their knowledge, this *Kṛpā* will initiate them into *Ātma-vichāra*. They will gain an inwardness, and the hold of the objective world will gradually unwind. When the attraction of a mighty spiritual being overpowers him, the seeker is irresistibly made to renounce.

In *Srimad Bhagavata*, the *gopīs* say, "We are trapped by Him, and have lost everything! We must not go anywhere near Him! *tadalamasitasakhyaiḥ*. Enough is this association with this Dark One!" What has happened due to that

association?—"bahava iha vihaṅgā bhikṣucaryāṃ caranti. Many are the swans that fly in the transcendental ether of *Ātmānubhūti*. Due to their association with Him, having left home and hearth, they are wandering about as *bhikshus* (mendicants)."

Guru is the Mighty force of Brahman that gives us knowledge, spiritual practice and Realisation. Renunciation of worldly ties and strong dispassion towards worldly pleasures is not easy to come by. But when one is caught by the attraction of that force, it comes about effortlessly, and everything leaves us on its own. A great amount of spiritual power descends in the seeker's body.

Renunciation

Renunciation does not simply mean external *sanyāsa* or running away from responsibilities. A devotee once asked Ramana Bhagavan, "It is too troublesome to be in a family. I wish to leave everything and take to *sanyāsa*." Bhagavan replied jokingly, "I too did that and now see here, what a big family I have! See how many are around me!" Glancing at the devotee compassionately, he continued, "How do they trouble you? Know your Self. Then you will no more see them separate from your Self. Turn your attention towards your Self. Now you believe yourself to be the body and a householder; if you renounce, you will think of yourself as a *sanyāsī*. In both cases you retain your body-consciousness." Then the devotee asked him further: "In that case, why did

you leave everything?” Bhagavan said: “I did not go around asking anyone, like you.” If that were your *prārabdha* (fate) or *niyati* (nature’s will), then you would not ask others whether you should leave or not. It would have simply happened.

Now a genuine question may arise, ‘If this is so, why do the scriptures prescribe *sanyāsa*? Why do earnest seekers leave their family for God-realisation?’ *Śāstras* say, “Only after renunciation, one should listen to the words of the Master.” Mahabharata says, “*ātmārthe prthvīm tyajet*. For the sake of the Self or God, one can renounce the entire earth.” True, such renunciation is the greatest *tapas*. Such renunciation happens in rare blessed ones prompted by the power of the inner voice. The whole world is benefited by their renunciation. But for the majority, slow ripening is advisable, as simple outer renunciation will not be beneficial for them.

The problem does not lie with the family, but with our attachment to bodily relations, and with our likes and dislikes to them. Our attachment saps our energy and disturbs *ātma-dhyāna*. All these things, people and emotions tell on our nervous system. Thoughts about them cloud our inner vision. This is *vikalpa*. If everything stays outside and nothing enters within, then there is no problem. But when they enter within us, we are in trouble. We will not be able to direct our thoughts towards the Self. “Let the boat be in the water but not the water in the boat”, goes the saying. So,

we can be in the world, but if the world enters us, then our boat of life will sink in the world.

Getting the world out of us, therefore, is the preliminary step. How do we do this? For this, we must first understand what the world is. What is the nature of this world that we see? This is the subject of the first verse; it begins with the word 'viśvam' (the universe) as that is what we see before us. From the seen, we need to travel to the seer, which is the Ātman. From the known to the knower.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

**Lead us from the unreal to the Real
From darkness to Light
From death to Immortality.**



Chapter One

THE SEEN AND THE SEER

There are two principles in our experiential plane: one is the world or the 'seen', and the other is the awareness of simple existence as 'I am'. In our lives, we are used to giving importance to the world which is perceived through the senses. We get involved in that which we see before us. All branches of science, whether they be physics, chemistry, astrology, astronomy or any other, have been developed due to the outward bent of our minds. When our attention goes out to the world or that which is seen, it is science. When the same attention turns inwards, away from the seen and to the seer, then that marks the beginning of spiritual quest or *Vedānta*. '*Veda*' means knowing and '*anta*' means the end—the Infinite Knower. So, *Vedānta* means dissolving the knowing in the knower.

Nowadays there is a growing tendency to explain spirituality using science. This is quite baseless as science and spirituality cannot go together. It is not that they are inimical to each other, but the two are inherently different. In the world of science, the focus is always directed outwards, whereas in spirituality, the attention is to be focused inwards. When one turns inwards and focuses on the seer, objective knowledge ceases. But when the outward focus gains in strength, the seer will disappear into the cloud of

objective knowing. We can notice this in our everyday activities—when we get mesmerised by something, we tend to forget ourselves and become the thing itself. This is known as ‘*vṛtti sārūpya*’ in Yogasutra.¹² It could be an emotion inside us (*vikāra*) or an object outside (*padārtha*) or any action (*kriyā*). In such a state, our attention flows outwards and cannot abide in the seer. Hence, this method of combining science and spirituality is not feasible. Sages prefer solitude and sit inside some remote cave and shut themselves off from the world only to withdraw the mind from the objective world and to direct it towards the Seer, the Self. Form is food for the eyes. If someone walks by in front of us, our eyes naturally go towards that passing figure. If we analyse this phenomenon of ‘seeing’, we will see that it is the *chittam* (mind) which jumps out through the eyes to consume that form.

दृग्दृश्यौ द्वौ पदार्थौ स्तः परस्परविलक्षणौ ।

दृग् ब्रह्म दृश्यं मायेति सर्ववेदान्तडिण्डिमः ॥

(Brahmajnanavalimala 17)

There are two things which are different from each other. They are the seer and the seen. The seer is Brahman and the seen is *māyā*. This is what *Vedānta* proclaims.

A simple definition for *māyā* is ‘*dṛśya*’ or ‘whatever is seen’. The seer, which is of the nature of pure experience,

¹² Yogasutra 1.4

consciousness, is Brahman. Therefore, to realise the Self, our attention must turn from the *drśya* (that which is perceived) to the *drk* (the seer). For our attention to turn inwards, anything that we take to be real outside must lose its hold on us. We will generally not let go of something that we believe to be giving us comfort, and as long as we continue to believe that something outside can give us comfort, however much we may try, the mind will not rest in the Heart on its own. The mind will continue to be drawn to what we perceive outside—the world or *viśvam*.

Viśvam

Bhagavatpada begins the Dakshinamurti Stotra with the word *viśvam*. It is also the first name in Vishnu Sahasranama. *Viśvam* generally means universe or world. But in Vishnu Sahasranama, *viśvam* means *Īśvara*. The word *viśvam* has come from the root '*viś*'—which means '*praveśa*' or 'to enter'. '*tatsrṣtvā tadevānuprāviśat*'¹³ is the *pramāṇa śruti* for this—'He created and entered it Himself.' What is the world? We really do not know, and nor is it possible to have complete knowledge about the world even in this age of such stellar scientific progress. That which eludes our understanding is *māyā*—'*yuktiśūnya vastuprakāśa*. It is irrational yet appears to exist.' We see it (the world), but its cause remains a mystery to us.

¹³ Taittiriya Upanishad 2.6.1

Once, I heard a boy reading from a geography book: “The universe is vast and limitless. Till now no one has found its end. Scientists are still searching for the boundary of the universe.” The boy was reading this with great interest. I asked him, “Just think for a moment—what is meant by ‘the end of the universe’? Does it mean that there will be a wall there, or will we fall from there into an abysmal pit? What is really meant by ‘end’?” The child thought for a while and remarked with wonder in his eyes, “That’s right. I don’t know. What do they mean by end?” This ‘I do not know’ marks the end of all objective knowledge and is also the beginning of spiritual quest.

So, what do we mean by the ‘end of the universe’? Is it the end of space? If it is the end of space, we cannot imagine that at all. Then our question itself becomes meaningless. If space were to end, then what would be beyond it? That too becomes a meaningless question. When we question this way, we will realise that all such research is comparable to a dream that we may have seen the previous night. Can we ever find logic for what is seen in our dreams?

This universe appears to be infinite. Infinite means that which has no limitation. Infinite itself implies *advaita* or *non-duality*, as there cannot be two infinities. Infinite implies that there is only one. When we say ‘one’, we are not referring to the numeral one. Only if a second thing exists, can we call the other as one; when there is only one, we can no longer call it one. That is why we say that it is *advaita* or non-dual.

An enlightened one is least interested in speaking about the world, as that which is seen in the state of delusion vanishes when the right knowledge arises. He silently reposes in his own Self, refusing to present a thesis on yesterday's dream. His response to the cause of creation is silence—'*maunam param sammataṁ*.'¹⁴ Silence is the mark of intelligence. Wherever he looks he sees Ātman alone. He cannot see anything besides that 'One'. For him, there is nothing apart from Ātman—only one thing exists.

As long as this *viśvam* is seen as separate from Ātman, it will stand as an insurmountable obstacle for repose in the Self. The visible world will continue to capture our attention and will eat up our energy. That is, it will confuse and pull us into a whirlpool of thoughts. It will not allow us to abide in the stillness of peace of our *swarūpa*. The purpose of *Vedānta vichāra* is to swallow and to assimilate the universe. Sureshwaracharya gives a remarkable simile about this in his *vārttika*.

भुक्तं यथाऽन्नं कुक्षिस्थं स्वात्मत्वेनैव पश्यति ।

पूर्णाहन्ताकबळितं विश्वं योगीश्वरस्तथा ॥ (Manasollasa 1.15)

As the food eaten and digested, even though inside the stomach, is not felt separate from oneself, so too, this universe swallowed by cosmic consciousness (*pūrṇa ahanta*) is not seen as separate from the Self by the knower of Brahman.

¹⁴ Proudhanubhuti 11

Viśvam is nothing but our body. “*dehaṃ vinā pañca-vidhaṃ tadetat paśyanti ke vā bhuvanaṃ bhaṇantu*. Without the body which is made of the five sheaths, who has seen this world?” asks Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi in *Saddarsanam*.¹⁵

अण्डं वपुषि निःशेषं निःशेषं हृदये वपुः ।

तस्मादण्डस्य सर्वस्य हृदयं रूपसङ्ग्रहः ॥

The whole universe is in the body and the whole body is in the Heart. Hence, all of the universe is contained in the Heart.

भुवनं मनसो नान्य दन्त्यन्न हृदयात्मनः ।

अशेषा हृदये तस्मात् कथा परिसमाप्यते ॥

(Sri Ramana Gita 5.11-12)

The universe is nothing but the mind, and the mind is nothing but the Heart. Thus, the entire story of the universe culminates in the Heart.

So, the whole of the seen arises, remains and resolves in the Heart.

Having looked at what *viśvam* means and how a *Jñāni* views it, let us now contemplate on the first verse of the *Dakshinamurti Stotra*.



¹⁵ यत् पञ्च-कोशात्मकमस्ति देहं तदन्तरा किं भुवनं चकास्ति । देहं विना पञ्च-विधं तदेतत् पश्यन्ति के वा भुवनं भणन्तु ॥ (*Saddarsanam* 7)

VERSE ONE

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं
 पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।
 यः साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ १ ॥

*viśvaṃ darpaṇa-dr̥śyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṃ nijāntargataṃ
 paśyannātmani māyayā bahirivodbhūtaṃ yathā nidrayā ।
 yaḥ sākṣātkurute prabodha-samaye svātmānamevādvayaṃ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥1॥*

This universe is similar to the vision of a reflected city in a mirror. The entire vision happens in the Self. That which is within is projected as if it is outside, by the power of *māyā*. As the spell of dream breaks when one wakes up from sleep, the misapprehension ends for the knower and he realises that the One non-dual Self alone remains. To Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, who alone bestows this knowledge, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

The entire creation is there within, in the inner Being
 It's mere reflection that you behold as universe;
 Like an inhabited land reflected in a mirror!
 The mystic-power *māyā* is active and it projects the world
 As if outside the sensory boundary as in a dream.
 When by the grace of the Lord one awakens from this spell
 The Realisation dawns that 'One Whole Self alone is.'
 That Lord Dakshinamurti whose very form is Grace
 Is our sole refuge for the liberating knowledge of the Self.

The City Reflected

viśvaṃ darpaṇa-dṛśyamāna-nagarītulyaṃ—the world that is seen is similar to the reflection (*pratibimba*) of a city seen in a mirror, while the reflected (*bimba*) lies inside—**nija-antargataṃ. ātmani paśyan**—it is seen in the substratum that is Ātman, but appears **māyayā bahiḥ udbhūtaṃ iva**—as if manifested outside due to *māyā*. **yathā nidrayā**—as it is in sleep, **yaḥ prabodha-samaye svātmānam eva advayaṃ, sākṣāt kurute**—when he wakes up, he realises that the One non-dual Self alone remains. **tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye**—to the great teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, who bestows this divine knowledge, is this prostration.

This **viśvaṃ** or the world that we see around us is akin to **darpaṇa-dṛśyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṃ**—like the reflection of a city as seen in a mirror. ‘*darpaṇam*’ means mirror. A mirror is that which shows us our reflection. Does it do so perfectly? Even if it is a very good mirror, will it reflect perfectly? No, it shows things in reverse form. Whatever we see in it are only the inverted forms.

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।

छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ (Bhagavad Gita 15.1)

“It is an upside-down banyan tree”, says Lord Krishna. Why does the Lord say that the world is like an upside-down tree? If we see the reflection of a tree in a pond, it will be seen as an upside-down tree, while the real tree is standing

upright on the banks. Similarly, Sri Krishna is telling us that the world which we see is merely a reflection.

The simile of a city reflected in a mirror is quite well-known. Acharya has used the same simile in Vivekachudamani as well.

यत्रैष जगदाभासो दर्पणान्तः पुरं यथा ।

तद्ब्रह्माहमिति ज्ञात्वा कृतकृत्यो भविष्यसि ॥

(Vivekachudamani 292)

That in which there is the 'illusion' of the world, just as the 'city in the mirror', that Brahman 'I am'. Knowing that, you will experience the fulfilment of your life.

First, let us look at the meaning of this *śloka* '*viśvaṃ darpaṇa...*', then we shall look at the 'spiritual consequence' of knowing the world based on this simile. '*nagari*' means city. Imagine a mirror placed above a big city; if we look at the mirror, we will see the whole city reflected in it. But what is seen is merely a reflection and not the real city. Similarly, this world that is perceived by us is only a *pratibimba* or a reflection. What is it a reflection of? And where does the *bimba* or that which gets reflected, lie? *nija-antargataṃ*—within the self. That means, what is seen outside is only a reflection of whatever is within each one of us.

अन्तःसूक्ष्मस्वरूपेण कारणात्मागृहेस्थिताः ।

पदार्थाः स्थूलरूपेण निर्गच्छन्ति बहिः स्वयं ॥ (Vicharamala 89)

Those subtle *vāsanās* inherent within the causal body appear outside spontaneously as gross objects.

And on which screen or substratum are we seeing all these? *paśyan ātmani*—seen in the Ātman. Everything is experienced in the Ātman alone. The world, the body, the mind—everything is experienced in the Ātman. This is simple logic. This universe is present only if I exist. Only if I exist, is there recognition of this universe. Here ‘I’ means existence or consciousness. Consider this—if we do not have the experience of ‘I am’, then who remains to see the world? Other than in this centre of ‘I am’, where else can we experience anything? Our experience happens in the consciousness ‘I am’.

The first *mahāvākya* is ‘*prajñānam brahma*—the very nature of Brahman is consciousness’. Where to search for it? ‘*aham brahmāsmi*’. It has to be searched for within our experience of ‘I’. What we experience as ‘I’, ‘I’, ‘I’ is not thought-stuff. Everything else can be discarded as mere thought-stuff, but not this experience of ‘I’, ‘I’. Within this is hidden a great treasure. Once you know the real nature of the ‘I’, it will reveal itself as Brahman. It is this experience of ‘I am’ or ‘I exist’ that is referred to as ‘*ātmani*’ by Bhagavatpada here.

An insentient thing cannot have ‘experience’. This book does not know that it exists, and hence it also does not know that we exist. The nature of consciousness is existence or the

experience of existence. 'Experience' is the nature of Ātman. Consciousness, on its own, has the experience of its own existence without any other light. It is a light unto itself.

स्वबोधे नान्यबोधेच्छा बोधरूपतयात्मनः ।

न दीपस्यान्यदीपेच्छा यथा स्वात्मप्रकाशने ॥ (Atmabodha 29)

As a lighted lamp does not need another lamp for it to be seen, similarly, the Ātman, being consciousness itself, does not need another instrument to illumine itself.

In order to know our own existence, we do not need the help of anything else, as it is self-effulgent. Let's think about this—is my experience of 'I am' due to my mind? Or my senses? Is it because I see that I know that I am? If I sit in a dark room, will I doubt my existence? We could be doubtful of the presence of others near us, we may even doubt whether we are wearing any clothes or not, but will we ever doubt whether we exist or not? How do we experience this Truth? The Self experiences this on its own. Existence, experience, consciousness are all synonyms. Everything else is experienced in 'That' which experiences itself by itself. In that self-experience of 'I am', the light of knowledge shines, and it is in that light that the world or *viśvam* is seen—***paśyan***.

If we turn our attention inwards, focus it on the awareness of 'I am' and remain established in that, then nothing else is perceived. Then, neither the body, nor the

mind, nor the world exists. But the moment the mind moves and rises even a little bit, these are all felt once again. Where did they suddenly come from? And why are they seen? **māyayā**—due to **māyā**.

In Vivekachudamani, the *śishya*, having awakened to Self-realisation, asks the Guru in astonishment, “The world that was seen until moments ago, has now vanished! Where did it go? Who took it away?”

क गतं केन वानीतं कुत्र लीनमिदं जगत् ।

अधुनैव मया दृष्टं नास्ति किं महद्द्भुतम् ॥

(Vivekachudamani 484)

After some time, when the mind arises, the world is seen once again. We should get surprised about this—when we close our eyes, the world is gone, and when opened, the world appears. While sleeping, everything vanishes—there is no personality, no body, no man, no woman. But when we wake up, everything comes back. How so? **māyayā**—due to **māyā**.

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥ (Bhagavad Gita 7.14)

Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the three *guṇas* of nature (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) is difficult to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion.

Sri Ramana Maharshi sings in Arunachala Aksharamanamalai: ‘*śeyvinai śudum*, the fruit of past actions burns!’¹⁶ It does not mean that *Īśvara* is burning us on purpose; it means that if we ourselves move away from Him—our true nature—then *māyā* will burn us! Here, ‘*śeyvinai*’ means results of action or *māyā*. If our *dṛshṭi* moves away from *swarūpa*, then the force of *māyā* will be felt.

Now, one may ask, how to transcend *māyā*? It is not possible to do away with *māyā*. Can we chase away darkness and make it go away? No. It goes away when we bring in light, and reappears in the absence of light. Similarly, if we focus on the *sat*, then there will no longer remain any *asat*. But, if we do not focus on the *sat*, it is impossible to do away with *asat* whatever else we may do.

Why is it seen? *māyayā*—due to *māyā*. It is inexplicable. Do not seek explanations for this. We see all these things due to an inscrutable power of *Īśvara*—*anirvachanīya śakti*—a *śakti* that arises from the Ātman itself. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi has expressed this in Arunachala Ashtakam as follows.¹⁷

¹⁶ *chaiyentalaiṭṭi śeyvinai śudumalāl uyvahiyeḍurai aruṇāchalā*
(Aksharamanamalai 35)

¹⁷ *uṇḍoru poru-ṭari voḷi-yuḷa mēnī uḷa-dunil ala-dilā adisaya śakti*
nin-ḍranu nizhal-nirai ninai-vari vōḍē nikazh-vinai chuzha-lilan ninai-voḷi yāḍi
kaṇ-ḍana nizhaṭ-jaga vicit-tira muḷḷuṇ kaṇ-mudal porī-vazhi puṇat-tumor chillā
nin-ḍridu nizhal-paḍa niga-raruṭkundrē nin-ḍriḍa chen-ḍriḍa ninai-viḍa vinḍrē
(Arunachala Ashtakam 6)

Thou art Thyself, ever-aware as the Self-luminous Heart!
 In Thee is a mysterious power inseparable from Thee
 Whence proceeds the phantom of the mind
 Emitting its latent tendencies as subtle dark mist,
 Illumined by Thy light of *chit*, appears within as thoughts
 Whirling in orbits of *prārabdha* as seeds of psychic worlds
 Later, projected through the senses as the world
 This moves in Thee like a picture of shadows
 O Arunachala, the Hill of Grace, Thou alone exist!

Wake Up from the Dream

bahirivodbhūtaṃ—as if manifested somewhere outside us. That is how it appears. *yathā nidrayā*—as it is in sleep. Everyone experiences dreams while asleep. The dream feels so real that if during the dream, someone within the dream were to tell us that it is merely a dream, we would surely get annoyed! Wouldn't we? While viewing the dream, it appears to be extremely real for us.

Let us reflect some more on this phenomenon called dream—how do we see a dream? If I were to dream that I am giving a talk, though sleeping in a dark room, I see the dream in bright light. Though alone in the bedroom, I create the hall and the audience in the dream; I create the microphone, speakers, chairs, men, women, children and so on. After creating all this, I create myself as the speaker sitting on the podium. Everything and everyone in the dream

is created by me alone. On the one side I speak, and on the other side, I myself listen as the audience! Isn't this truly astonishing? Now let's consider this—while this dream is going on, and I am speaking as the speaker, and listening as the audience too, who is the one watching this dream? There is someone who is witnessing while illuminating both the speaker and the listeners. He alone is Truth. In Him is this dream seen.

In the dream, there is no one else present besides me. Everyone and everything in the dream is I myself—there is no other raw material there except myself. But during the dream, I feel that the speaker alone is me—that this 'I' alone is me—but all the rest, known as objects, is not me. If we contemplate on this strangeness of dreams, we shall come to know how delusion operates. All that I see and the seer-me appear and disappear in Ātman.

Thus, just as the world is seen in a dream, in exactly the same way, this world (*viśvam*) is perceived in the waking state as well—**yathā nidrayā**. We fail to understand this due to our delusion! **yaḥ sākṣātkurute prabodhasamaye**—as the dream and everything in it disappears the moment one wakes up from sleep, in the same way, when one gets '*ātma prabodha*' due to the grace of Guru—just as a person who has been sleeping since time immemorial wakes up—one wakes up from the spell of *māyā* and realises Ātman.

अनादिमायया सुप्तो यदा जीवः प्रबुध्यते ।

अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नमद्वैतं बुध्यते तथा ॥ (Mandukya Karika 1.7.16)

Having been asleep since time immemorial, as soon as the *jīva* awakens—*anidraṃ asvapnaṃ advaitaṃ buddhyate tathā*—at that very moment he wakes up to the experience that he is Brahman, the sleepless dreamless non-dual Reality. The dream in front of him vanishes for good.

While dreaming, we refuse to accept the dream as unreal, whereas, upon waking up, we are convinced beyond doubt about the illusory nature of the dream and refuse to accept it as real. Similarly, once we have *Ātmānubhava*, however much anyone tries to convince us that this world is real, we will not accept it. We will realise that whatever the senses show us as in a ludicrous glass (a pair of convex lenses that distort appearances beyond recognition) is nothing but the *Ātman* alone. No longer will we harbour any interest in letting our mind get involved in distorted sensory perceptions.

When one wakes up from the dream of the illusory individual sense, one realises the infinite blissful ever-free Brahman. All shades of ignorance leave one completely.

Release from the Eight Compulsions

In his commentary on Yoga-sutra, the great sage Sadasiva Brahmendra speaks about the eight kinds of release that are indications of Self-Realisation. They are:

<i>chikīrshā nivṛtti</i>	freedom from the urge to act
<i>jijñāsā nivṛtti</i>	freedom from inquisitiveness, the thirst to know
<i>prepsā nivṛtti</i>	freedom from ambition to attain.
<i>jihāsā nivṛtti</i>	freedom from compulsion to give up conditionings
<i>sankalpa nivṛtti</i>	freedom from imaginations born of desires
<i>bhaya nivṛtti</i>	absolute freedom from fear
<i>dvaita nivṛtti</i>	ending of the dual-sense, that is, non-self feeling
<i>vikalpa nivṛtti</i>	freedom from all misapprehensions

When one is free of all these shades of ignorance, the experience of the Self remains undiminished.

Do Not Peep into the Inscrutable

As long as we take the universe to be real, our mind will keep wandering out. *māyā* is such that if we try to understand it, we will let the mind out, and once the mind goes out, it is very difficult to bring it back. There are many stories in *Vedānta* that illustrate this inscrutability of *māyā*—the more one tries to understand it, the more one gets ensnared in its net. Therefore, our focus should be to know only the Ātman and not *māyā*—do not even harbour any thoughts or questions regarding *māyā*. Do not try to understand the creation, sustenance, disappearance and so

forth of this universe. As far as a *Jñāni* is concerned, he knows that anything and everything is possible in *māyā*, and therefore, he will not speak much about the world, birth, rebirth and such.

When someone asked Ramana Maharshi about rebirth, he said, **“See if you are born now. Who is born?”**

“I am born.”

“Who is this ‘I’? Where does the ‘I’ arise from? Search for it.”

Then you will find that the ego is unreal. In its place, the Ātman, which is birthless and deathless will reveal itself.

The wise sage prefers not to talk too much about phenomena such as birth, death and rebirth, for they are very complex and mysterious. In Yoga Vasishta, there is a story that brings out this inscrutable nature of *māyā*. Gadhi, a *tapasvi*, was once meditating on Lord Vishnu, standing neck deep in water. When Vishnu appeared before him, Gadhi requested that he wanted to know *māyā*. Vishnu granted the boon and disappeared.

Gadhi continued to do tapas for many years as a *vānaprastha*. As afflictions of old age assailed him, he went back to his village and lived with his family. He stayed under his family’s care for a few years and then passed away. In his next birth, he was born as an outcaste *chaṇḍāla* in the Huna-land and was known by the name Kadanjhaka. Here, he had

a big family. Unfortunately, a great drought hit the land and many people including Kadanjhaka's family perished in it. Unable to bear this grief, Kadanjhaka wandered aimlessly and soon reached the land of Kiramandala.

As their king had just died, the people of Kiramandala were in search of a new king. As per their tradition, a garland was given to the royal elephant and whomsoever it garlanded would be crowned as the next king. As it so happened, the elephant garlanded Kadanjhaka. People took him to be a *kshatriya* and coronated him as their next king. Not revealing his true identity, Kadanjhaka ruled over that kingdom for eight years.

One day, he found himself irresistibly drawn to a song sung by a *chaṇḍāla* and sang along with him. This *chaṇḍāla* recognised him to be Kadanjhaka and soon everyone came to know the truth about the king. The people of Kiramandala could not bear the fact that they were ruled by an outcaste—the queens immolated themselves in shame, and the Brahmins of the land set off for Kasi to undertake the *Chandrayana vrata* as a penance.

Deeply remorseful of his role in all of this, Kadanjhaka decided to end his life. As he was about to jump into the fire, he suddenly opened his eyes and found himself as Gadhi standing in the river with water up to his neck! All these events had unfolded in the span of a moment after Vishnu had disappeared after granting the boon! Gadhi understood

his folly and took a strong resolve to henceforth keep his mind focused on Ātman. Praying thus, he retired to his *kuṭīr*. Soon, a tired-looking Brahmin visited him. The Brahmin revealed that he was on his way back from Kashi after performing *Chandrayana vrata* as a *prāyaschitta*, as his people of Kiramandala had crowned an outcaste as their king. Gadhi was truly puzzled at this—what was seen within like a dream had now appeared outside! Stupefied, Gadhi accompanied this Brahmin to Huna-land to uncover this mystery. There, he was astonished to find out about the drought. Utterly bewildered, he meditated on Vishnu once again. When Vishnu appeared, Gadhi narrated the strange incidents and requested for an explanation. Vishnu said, ‘Well, this is *māyā*!’

How can we even begin to comprehend all this? That is why the *śāstras* advise us not to unduly waste our time and energy in trying to understand the ways and workings of *māyā*. Time and space are merely the playthings of *māyā*—anything is possible. If we contemplate on *māyā*, we would get caught up in its complexity and get utterly confused. Our sole aim should be *chittasamādhāna*—peace or quietude of mind.

This *viśvam* that we see in front of us is brought about due to the *anīrvachanīya śakti* (inexplicable power) of Ātman. As the illusory snake seen in the rope, the world too is seen projected in Ātman—*viśvaṃ...paśyannātmani māyayā*. It is when the mind arises that the world appears.

In deep sleep, where is the world and where is the body? Nothing is seen there. When the mind arises, and is in half-bloom, we call it dream; when it is fully bloomed we call it the waking state. If the world is real, then it ought to appear in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep; it is not enough if it appears only in the waking state (*jāgrat*). What remains changeless in all the three states alone can be accepted as true or real. The substratum in which the waking, dream and deep sleep happens is changeless. That is Ātman.

Combing the Mirror!

There are many subtle seeds within us that have sprouted outside as the world and as the people in our world—those whom we feel particularly close to us such as our husband or wife, our children, those we get angry with, those who attract us, those we are jealous of, and all those who appear before us—they are all a reflection of some subtle *bhāva* (feeling) within us. Whatever we see outside, there will certainly be a corresponding seed within us. What is inside has been projected outside, that is all.

If there is a problem in our lives, we should understand that there is something corresponding inside us—otherwise it wouldn't appear outside at all. If we are abused by someone, it means that there is some *vāsanā* within us which is the seed for this. If someone insults us, there is bound to be something inside which has evoked it. If we feel

that we are always surrounded by negative people, instead of complaining, we should learn to look within.

Do we ever attempt to comb our hair by combing the reflection seen in the mirror? No! We comb our own hair. We know that combing the mirror is of no use. If we set the inner centre right, the circumference too will set itself right and become harmonious automatically. It will not work if we try to address the issue at the circumference alone. If we are not happy with something or someone, instead of pointing a finger at them, we should point it towards ourselves and set ourselves right. There is no use in trying to fight or change what is seen outside—it will be like combing the mirror! Instead, we should remove the seed that is inside. How can we do this? By turning towards the Self.

You are my Reflection

For the seeker, **viśvam** does not mean the cosmos, planets and so forth. *Viśvam* is that which pulls our mind out. All those who are around us due to our *prārabdha* are our world, and our attention goes mostly to these people. To turn our attention inwards, we must understand that they are our own reflection. Then, we will no longer ask questions about them or try to change their behaviour.

Someone once asked Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swami of Kanchi, “Swami, even though you teach *Vedic dharma*, those around you don’t seem to follow many things that you say.” The humble sage replied, “If they do not

follow them, it only means that I have not done enough *tapas*. You are all a part of me; you are my reflection. I cannot find fault with the reflection as it is my own fault that I see reflected in you.” This is the secret of the Seer’s vision. A real yogi knows this secret very well. Others, who live in objectivity think, ‘I am here, and they are there; we are all different.’

A *darpaṇa maṇḍapa* is a hall made of mirrors and in it there are mirrors everywhere—up, down, everywhere. Once a dog entered such a mirror-hall, and looking around, it saw many dogs in front, many dogs behind, many in the sides and so on. There were dogs above and below too; whichever direction it looked, there were many dogs looking back at it! As is its nature, the dog barked and found that all the other dogs barked right back at him. The dog barked even louder hoping to scare away the other dogs, but they just barked back at him. This continued for some time until finally the dog fell down, exhausted. Later, a young man entered this mirror-hall and admired himself happily in the various reflections seen. This young man was unperturbed as he knew that what was seen was his own reflection, whereas the dog mistook the reflections to be other dogs and ended up miserable.

Similarly, a *Jñāni* who has understood his real nature knows that everything is his own Self. Outwardly he may wear many disguises, but since he knows the truth, he remains happy and joyful under all circumstances.

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ (Isavasyopanishad 6)

The one who beholds all beings in Ātman, and sees Ātman alone in all beings, never hates anyone nor is he bothered about his own safety.

To the Knower, all has become Ātman and Ātman has become all. Hence, for him, the mirror of the Self shines forth as pure awareness free of all names and forms. The Knower has lost his delusion. If we see anything other than the Self, there will be delusion. If we see the body, differences will be seen, and delusion will persist. One will feel either attracted or repelled; one will have likes and dislikes; one will feel desire, anger, jealousy—all these will be there. This delusion is the sole cause for all our problems.

One may have many justifications for all the problems seen outside. However, who is affected? I am affected. Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita, “The one who sees everyone as the Self, he doesn’t do any damage to himself.”¹⁸ The one who sees the other is harming himself. If I harbour any ill feeling towards you, even though you may be blissfully ignorant about it, I remain worried and upset carrying that burden upon myself. So, the only one who suffers is me, isn't it?

¹⁸ समं पश्यन्ति सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् । न हिनस्त्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥
Bhagavad Gita 13.29

When faced with a problem, we should reflect, 'Who are all these people? They are all my own reflection; they are a projection of something that is within me. If they behave in a difficult manner, there should be a reason for that inside me. I can set the problem right only by setting myself right.' And how can we set ourselves right? The easiest method is to make the other non-existent. How is it possible to make the reflection disappear? By letting go of the thoughts. Everything outside that creates a sense of difference is only because of thought. Thought happens because of the ignorance that 'others' exist.

Consider this—there may be many people whom I see regularly, but as long as they do not enter my thought-field, they do not exist for me. However, the ones I know intimately affect me as I keep thinking about them. Even if someone is not in front of me, I can be miserable by merely thinking about them. Even fictitious story characters are sometimes seen to incite desire, anger, horror, etc. in people. Mere thinking creates suffering! **Nothing exists other than the Self**—this knowledge is the only medicine for this suffering.

If something or someone makes us suffer, and we have no choice but to deal with it, then we should deal with it as well as we can, but not allow it to enter our sensory realm. We need to learn to forget. Nothing heals like forgetting. Complete erasing of a hurt happens only when we forget. Forgetting is the celestial herb that heals all hurts. Nothing

other than Ātman exists. This knowledge will help to erase thoughts.

Awakening to the Non-Dual

Bhagavatpada says that the body and the world appear in the Ātman—*ātmani*—just as in a dream. If we are to know the Ātman, then it is necessary that we forget all the dream-stuff, that is, we must transcend them. The basic dream that we all have is, ‘I am someone’—this has to be transcended. *‘jīvaṃ kalpayate pūrvaṃ tato bhāvān pṛthagvidhān.’*¹⁹ The *jīva* is conceived first; the world and everything else is thought of only after that. So, who is this person? Who is this ‘I’? Instead of allowing our attention to fall on the world outside, we should enquire about the one who is seeing the world—‘Who am I?’ We must investigate and look deep into the ego ‘I’. ‘Who is the one who sees the world? Who is the one who knows the world?’

One need not enquire into what is seen, but the attention should shift to the one who sees—‘*aham uruvai nangu arindu munnīr nadi pōlum oyumē.*’²⁰ When we search for the ‘I’, when we continue to look carefully for its real nature, just as a river flowing towards the ocean merges

¹⁹ Mandukya Karika 2.16

²⁰ *ahamukhamā ranta vāmalamati tannāl ahamidutā nengezhumen drāyndē ahavuvuvai nangarindu munnīr nadipōlu mōyumē unganaru nāchalanē yōr*
अहमिति कुत आयातीत्यन्विष्यान्तः प्रविष्टयात्यमलधिया ।

अवगम्य स्वं रूपं शाम्यत्यरुणाचल त्वयि नदीवाधौ ॥ (Arunachala Pancharatnam 3)

there, so too this ego 'I' will go and merge into that limitless expanse of Beingness. Then we will come to know that this ego 'I' was never real—only the Infinite whole, Brahman is real. **Ātman alone IS.**

One needs to keep searching for the ego 'I'. When one is in the midst of situations, when one is involved in various activities of the world, without allowing our *chittam* (mind) to identify with what is happening, one must repeatedly enquire: "Who is the experiencer; who is the knower behind all that is known; who is the one in the midst of various situations?" This contemplation must be done till the self-effulgence of the Self hatches out of the egg of ignorance. As we repeatedly turn our attention inwards, soon we will notice that even when various activities go on outside, there is complete silence and peace within. As we go on tasting this wholeness, this tranquillity, more and more, just as a dream vanishes when we wake up, matter too will disappear in the Self.

When we declare that 'matter will disappear', what is meant is that even though externally everything will remain the same, it will cease its hold on us as being real; this is similar to a mirage seen in the desert. We may see water in the mirage, but once we go near, we realise that there never was any water—it was a mere illusion! After this realisation, even if one continues to see the water, we are certain that it is not there at all—what is present is not water, but only sand. Similarly, the one who realises the Ātman comes to

know that Ātman alone exists and that nothing exists apart from It. To him, the universe appears in Ātman like a cinema on a screen. For such a person, even when the world is seen there is no problem at all, as whatever is seen is Ātman alone—there is nothing apart from It. If the existence of the ‘other’ has left him, then he has awakened from the dream—***prabodha-samaye svātmānam eva advayaṃ, yaḥ sākṣāt kurute.***

Realisation means the revelation of the ever-revealed. The very nature of Ātman is Self-effulgence—*swayamprakāśa*. Hence it is always known, but not recognised. That which shines within us as the experience ‘I’, ‘I’ uninterruptedly at all times is Brahman alone!

Let us say, we have a pot with a hole in its bottom, and holding it up, we look at the sky through the hole. If asked what is seen, we may say that we only see a small limited blueness. Similarly, the infinite *chidākāśa* is misapprehended by us as if limited by the body. Within our body there is an experience of ‘I’, and it appears to be limited by the body. When we see a mountain from afar, it seems very small and contained within our eyes, but if we keep on walking towards it and go nearer and nearer, then we ourselves will become a speck compared to the sheer vastness of the mountain! Similarly, as we go on paying attention to the experience of ‘I’ within us—the experience of *Chit*, the Consciousness ‘I’—soon we ourselves will vanish into it, and only THAT—the endless *chidākāśa*, will remain. Into the *Chit*,

the *chittam* will disappear. '*chittam chitbhakshitam*'—*chittam* gets consumed by *Chit* says Yoga Vasishtha. The feeling of being an individual will disappear; all this 'I', 'you', 'he' delusion will disappear. That One experience alone will remain. This is *Anubhūti*, *Chit*, *Śivam*. ***svātmānam eva advayaṃ, yaḥ sākṣāt kurute***—when he realises the non-dual Ātman, *Śivam* alone remains.

Easy Way to Realisation is to Trust the Words of Guru

Vedānta means perfect knowledge. 'Veda' or knowledge reaches its zenith (*anta*) here. It is so simple but also very difficult—this is what makes it truly astonishing. It is simple because it talks about the ever-attained Self. It is not speaking about something new, or something that is far away from us. Another reason for its simplicity is the fact that there is nothing to be done to realise it. The Master just indicates it—that too, often in silence—and yet the disciple realises. That makes it perfectly simple. However, even with all our efforts put together, we will not be able to realise it until Guru's grace—until the power of an illumined being, is upon us. That makes it appear a difficult task.

See how the Tamil saint Thayumanavar sings ecstatically about the glory of Guru's words.

- Without knowing the power of Grace
- I tried in vain with all my strength to know the Truth
- I saw only blinding darkness everywhere

And then, He my Master appeared before me and uttered one word

Lo the power of the WORD, the picture of the world vanished!

The barrier was broken, waters of bliss rushed in

When the senses popped open, a great mass of light deluged the vision

Wherever I looked I saw only light! light! light!

Transcendental space swallowed the seer and the seen!

He now stands revealed as the supreme *parāparam!*

He is the inner Self, He is the universe, the Cosmic Being!

(Ananda Kalippu and Parapara Kanni, Thayumanavar)

All this will come very easily to us if we decide that we want it. We must feel that we should not get caught believing this world to be real. We may have understood this with our intellect, but we must be determined to transcend it and have the inner yearning to attain that experience. One must want nothing in this world, and then, one must have great devotion towards the Guru. One of the easiest ways to Realisation is to have unflinching trust in Guru's words. This trust is not blind faith. When a scientist tells us something, we accept it readily as we have full faith in his intelligence, and also believe that he has no intention to mislead us. Similarly, the great *rishis* have explored and found out the Truth. Out of their immense compassion for us, they have preserved and handed over this sacred knowledge which is based on their direct experience.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

(Swetaswataropaniṣad 23)

One who has intense *bhakti* to the beloved form of *Īśvara*, and equally towards the Guru, to him all these teachings will shine forth as experience.

A sure shortcut in this path is to have absolute trust in the words of the Guru. It is enough if we can comprehend his compassion—that itself would give rise to this trust within us. We may even question him initially, but once we are convinced that he is a *Jñāni*, we should surrender to him unconditionally. Surrender is intelligence. If he calls night as day, we should be able to accept it readily without a question—that sort of faith is needed. Once we know the true depth of his state, then, let us accept his words completely. We shall have the experience of ‘All is Brahman’ just by simple trust in the words of the Master or the Upanishads.

If we try to learn the *śāstras* on our own, we may wonder whether it is possible for us to attain this mighty task with our own effort. On the other hand, if we have trust in *Kṛpā*, then the *śāstras* will reveal Brahman to us very easily. However, right at the beginning itself, if we expect that *Kṛpā* alone would do the job, that will not happen either. Only after putting in much effort will the ego recognise its powerlessness and insufficiency. Only then does it become fit to surrender and receive the higher force—*Kṛpā*. An

unsundered ego cannot invoke Grace. After enquiry, it comprehends its limitations clearly. When it knows that it surely requires a higher power to take it to the Truth, then it subsides on its own.

This is the surrender referred to in the words ***tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye! tasmai*** means, 'to Him, who alone can lead me from darkness to light.' It can also be interpreted as, 'in order to give me that experience, that *Ātmānubhava*'. ***gurumūrtaye śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye***—'to that Dakshinamurti, the one who is *Jñānaswarūpa*—of the form of *Jñāna*; the one who is *chaitanyasāndra*—solidified divine Awareness', ***idam namaḥ***—'we pay this obeisance' or 'I surrender.'

In *Ātma-vichāra*, the ego is made to fall at the source, whereas in *bhakti*, the body is made to fall at the feet of the Guru or God with *namaskārabhāva*. The body is verily the manifested form of the ego. Once the ego merges in the source, the body will also lose its reality. In *bhakti*, the devotee denies everything from the body to the subtle 'I' by surrendering them to the Lord. By doing so, the ego evaporates along with all its adjuncts. That is why each hymn in the Dakshinamurti Stotra ends with the word ***namaḥ*** which means surrender—***tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye***. Once we surrender, we will see that He alone exists; then, we will no more be caught in this cycle of birth and death. Once we attain this Realisation, we will come to know that we have neither birth nor death.

Warm Stream of Contemplation

Therefore, this entire world—all that is seen, all the problems that affect us—is just a movie seen in the Ātman! For this idea to be spiritually alive, we need to do thorough *manana* (deep reflection), and then absorb and assimilate it into our system. We should reflect on this *śloka* (*viśvaṃ darpaṇa...*) every day. While doing *japa*, when the surface mind is hushed to silence, let this warm stream of contemplation flow behind the throb of the *mantra*. Do not allow any weeds of doubt to grow in the inner field of meditation. Nourish yourself with the sacred waters of faith in the teacher. “This has been taught by Bhagavatpada who is Siva himself”—this faith is enough for us to get the fruit. This is the easiest and the most direct way to heal ourselves of the dire malady of ignorance.

Whatever is seen, felt, is only the Ātman.

Nothing, no one exists other than Ātman; accept this.

Trust this and this instant you are Brahman, you are enlightened.

Simple, simple like a blossoming flower is this realisation.

Clear like daylight is this knowledge

This is the one and only divine herb

That heals all the maladies with just one dose.



Chapter Two

EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION

In the first *śloka*, we saw that this universe that is perceived is akin to a reflection seen in a mirror. *nijāntargataṃ bahiriva paśyan*—that which is within, is seen as though outside; *yathā nidrayā*—just as in a dream seen while asleep; *ātmani paśyan*—it is seen superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the Self.

One may ask, “We see this world and we experience it, then how can it be said that it does not exist?” **In truth, we do not experience the world—what is experienced is the Ātman alone. It is the experience of Ātman that we misconstrue and perceive as the world. Experience is never of *dṛśya*, but always of *dṛk*.** Although I see all of you very clearly, I do not ‘experience’ you; I experience only myself. Experience is self-effulgent. What is seen cannot be called as an experience—it is only a perception. If I shut my eyes, I can neither see you, nor will I know whether you are present or not; but, even with my eyes closed, I will certainly not lose the sense of ‘I AM’. That sense alone is Experience. *“anubhūtiḥ svayaṃprakāśā anubhūtitvāt.”*²¹ Experience is self-effulgent. *Why? Because it is experience. Give an analogy.* Experience is the only analogy”, say Tarkikas.

²¹ Tattvapradipika, Chitsukhi

To know whether others are present or not, we have to feel them through our senses. But to know my Self, I have no need of the senses. Once, a famous yoga teacher was conducting a meditation class. There were about ten people in the room; the lights were switched off, and they all sat for meditation in the dark. After about an hour, the teacher announced, “Turn the lights on!” But no one got up to do so. The teacher felt very happy as he thought that everyone was in deep meditation. He himself got up and turned the lights on and found that there was no one else in the room. Everyone had silently left!

Let’s look at this word ‘experience’ or ‘*anubhava*’. We may think that there is something new to be gained by spiritual experience. Anything that is experienced anew may also leave us at any time. ‘*siddhamā yulporu-ḷait tērn-diruttal siddhi-piṛa siddhi-yelāñ soppa-namār siddhigaḷē*.’²² Ramana Bhagavan says that recognising the ever-attained ‘Thing’—the Self, is the greatest *siddhi*; all other attainments are mere dream-stuff!

The experience of ‘I am’ that we clearly feel within us—that alone is experience, and everything else that is known through the senses, is perception. I see all of you, and that seeing is *pratīti* or perception. Even if I see the whole universe, that is mere sensory perception. But, I do not ‘see’

²² Ulladu Narpadu 35, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

myself. Can anyone see themselves? If I wish to think of another person, I need their form—otherwise it is impossible to think of another. But, do I need my form to think of myself? No! The experience of my own existence is devoid of any forms. Is it possible to bring in our form seen in a mirror in the place of the feeling 'I'? Try, and you will find it impossible. No form can survive in that centre where you feel your 'am-ness'. Do I have to touch my body to know myself? No! Do I have to think and know? No! Thought cannot touch my existence. There, thought does not operate.

The sense 'I AM' is not made of thought—it is pure Awareness, and it is experienced timelessly without using the mechanism of the thinking process. It is *kevala-anubhava* or non-dual Experience. **It is as it is even in deep sleep.** In that pure Awareness, our bodily image is not present at all.

In the experience of one's existence, there is no form; there is nothing as seen in a photo, nothing as seen in a mirror. All of us experience our existence as simple consciousness—'I AM', and that which we experience is nothing but the Ātman. However, the reason why we do not get the benefit of that experience is because we do not value it. We value only what is perceived through the senses—we give importance to what is seen, what is heard, what is smelt, what is touched and what is tasted. We do not give our attention to the eternal experience of our own Self as mere 'I am'. Instead, we say that we want to see the

Ātman—that is not possible! Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching are phenomena that appear in the Ātman. Ātman cannot be seen, heard, smelt, tasted or touched. It is the experience of the experiencer. ‘vijñātāramare kena vijānīyāt²³—how can anyone know the knower?’

Here, a division has come about. Seeing, hearing and so on are not experiences—they are sensory perceptions. Experience is not sensory. It is a light unto itself—*swayamprakāśā*! Only when this is known can actual meditation happen; otherwise, only imaginary meditation will happen. It will only be a mental process. Once we understand this principle, our attention will constantly turn towards the experience of ‘I am’. That is the light for the entire world, ‘*prakāśānām prabhākaraḥ*²⁴—That gives light to everything.’ That shines on its own. To know ‘I am’, no other light is needed—it is self-effulgent.

We have only one power at our disposal, and that is the power of attention or *śraddhā*. Wherever or whatever that power is focused on, it will become that. That power of *śraddhā*, when extroverted it is the mind, and when introverted it is the Self. ‘*chit-śaktiḥ chetanārūpā jaḍaśaktiḥ jaḍātmikā*’—these are two names of the Divine Mother in

²³ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.14

²⁴ प्रकाशात्मिकया शक्त्या प्रकाशानां प्रभाकरः प्रकाशयति यो विश्वं प्रकाशोऽयं प्रकाशतामः ॥
(Manasollasa 10.24)

Lalita Sahasranama. When turned outwards, She is *jadaśakti*—the power of matter, and when turned inwards, She is *Chit-Śakti*—Consciousness.

The Dog's Tail

Our attention or *śraddhā*, has got stuck in the world. And this has happened due to our conviction that this world is real. So much research is being done about this world. All discoveries are about it and for it. So much effort is spent on reforming the world. Even while yearning to realise the Self, seekers too fall into the trap of desiring to reform the world and doing good for the world. This is because of the belief that there is something to be achieved here. We live under the delusion that we can easily change the world. After his monumental renaissance work, Swami Vivekananda said: "This world is like the tail of a dog. You can keep on straightening it out, but it will keep bending back!" But there is something to be gained by trying again and again. One day, we will learn the great lesson that the tail can never be straightened! Then the mind will move within. The most that one can gain by toiling in the world is *vairāgya*.

Only with sufficient dispassion, can a mature seeker turn within. As long as we believe that there is something to be done outside, however noble it might be, the mind will refuse to abide in the Self. In truth, there is neither good nor bad. For instance, Bhagavan Krishna asked Arjuna to fight. Is that a good thing? Krishna told him, "It is your destiny; you

cannot put your bow down even if you choose to. So, go and fight!" In this same manner, all our *karma* is our destiny, our fate—it will not leave us. But fate or *karma* is not Ātman. It is 'anātmā'—non-Self. It is only made of dream-stuff. So why bother with it? Our attention should not be placed outside on any of these. Let us turn the attention towards the Self, the sense 'I AM' which is made of His luminosity. Only thus can we release ourselves from this *samsāra*—that is the only way.

There are certain kinds of teachers who are 'destiny philosophers'. 'Whatever is destined to happen will happen'—this is their teaching. Though this is the crux of Bhagavan Ramana's *upadeśa* to his mother, he told her so only to quieten her mind. This is not his teaching. Bhagavan never said that everything is due to destiny. On the contrary, He has only said that 'everything is Ātman'. "Neither destiny nor free will exists", says Bhagavan in Forty Verses on Reality. If you argue for destiny or free will, for whom is destiny and whose is free will? Of course, the answer will be 'mine'. And here you have to face the question—'Who am I?' Like fire, this enquiry will burn the seed of ignorance which is in the form of ego.

विधेः प्रयत्नस्य च कोऽपि वादस्तयोर्द्वयोर्मूलमजानतां स्यात् ।

विधेः प्रयत्नस्य च मूलवस्तु सजानतां नैव विधिर्न यत्नः ॥

(Saddarsanam 19)

Debates about destiny and free will are only by those who do not know the source of both. Those who have realised the Truth—which is the very source of destiny and free will—are beyond both and remain untouched by them.

Destiny and free will are both bondage. Free will is resourced by destiny and destiny is formed from free will. In fact, destiny is free will or free will is destiny. Neither destiny nor free will exists; only the Self, Brahman exists. One should be very clear about this. Otherwise those who get blocked in destiny philosophy will enter blinding darkness. Their spiritual life will become boring and *sādhana* will die. The Self is ever free. It is not bound by the prison house of destiny. Let destiny operate in the realm of body and mind. **You are neither the body nor the mind. You are Brahman. You are That. Freedom is your real nature.**

It is said that the whole of the universe is within you. In what form is it? This question is addressed in the following *śloka*.



VERSE TWO

बीजस्याऽन्तरिवाङ्कुरो जगदिदं प्राङ्निर्विकल्पं पुनः
 मायाकल्पितदेशकालकलना वैचित्र्यचित्रीकृतम् ।
 मायावीव विजृम्भयत्यपि महायोगीव यः स्वेच्छया
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ २ ॥

*bījasyā'ntarivāṅkuro jagad-idam prāṇnirvikalpaṃ punaḥ
 māyā-kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā vaicitrya-citrī-kṛtam ।
 māyāvīva vijṛmbhayatyapi mahā-yogīva yaḥ svecchayā
 tasmai śrī-gurumūrtaye nama idam śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥2॥*

Like a powerful illusionist or a great yogi, the Lord projects this universe out of His own free will. Before creation, there was only HE as pure awareness (*nirvikalpa*). In Him, this universe remained unmanifest like the future tree in a seed. Later, the Lord Himself projected it with the power of His *māyā* with all endless variety like time and space. To Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, who alone can awaken us, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

In the beginning was *nirvikalpa*—neither form nor void,
 Only division-less pure Awareness, the One Whole,
 The self-effulgent primal seed of this creation!
 Like the sprout of a banyan, in Him was hidden this Universe.
 And in the unborn One the mystic power awoke.
 Unleashed was the 'Cosmic Will'—the macrocosmic dream body!
 Time, space, causation all unfolded in that expansion!
 A purposeless sport of a deluding juggler?
 Or the compassion of a mighty *Yogin* for our past desires?
 Who can unlock the inscrutable mansion of the Unborn!
 Suffice, we fall at the feet of the Silent One, Dakshinamurti.

The Sprout within the Seed

bījasya antaḥ aṅkuraḥ iva—like the sprout inside the seed, ***idaṃ jagat prāṇ-nirvikalpaṃ***—in the beginning, this universe remained unmanifest; it existed as pure *Chit*. From a state of *nirvikalpa*, ***punaḥ māyā-kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā vaicitrya-citrī-kṛtam***—later on, by the sheer power of *māyā*, all deluding forces such as space and time have sprouted forth. How does it appear? ***māyāvī iva vijṛmbhayati***—it unfolds as if in a magic show by a magician. ***mahāyogi iva api***—like a *mahāyogi* too, ***yaḥ svecchaya***—one who by His will—*Īśvara* projects this entire creation by His Will. To Him, the Supreme teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, who alone can awaken us, is this prostration—***tasmai śrī-gurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye***.

Once Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi and some devotees were on a walk near Samudram Lake in Tiruvannamalai. On the way, they saw this strange sight—a tall palmyra tree enveloped completely by a huge banyan tree. A bird's dropping, containing a tiny seed of banyan, must have fallen in a hole in the trunk of this palmyra tree. With time, this seed grew into a banyan sapling and soon became a tree so huge that it swallowed this palmyra tree within it. Beholding this unusual sight, Ramana Bhagavan gave a profound analogy. Bhagavan said, "In a *jīva*, the seed of *vāsanā* arises and expands as the mind. In due course, it appears as *saṃsāra* and engulfs him as this huge banyan tree has done with the palm tree!"

‘इदम्’ अनुभूयमानं सर्वं ‘जगत्’ ‘प्राक्’ उत्पत्तेः पूर्वं ‘निर्विकल्पं’ भोक्तृभोग्यादिविकल्परहितम् आत्ममात्रमेवासीत्; ‘आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत्’ ‘सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीत्’ इत्यादिश्रुतेः । तत्र दृष्टान्तमाह—बीजस्येति। ‘बीजस्यान्तः’ मध्ये ‘अङ्कुर इव’ । उपलक्षणमेतत्—पल्लवपत्रपुष्पफलशाखा-विटपात्मकवृक्षो यथा उत्पत्तेः पूर्वं निर्विकल्पं बीजमात्रमासीत्तद्वत् । ‘पुनः’ पश्चात् सृष्टिसमये, ‘मायाकल्पित-देशकालकलना-वैचित्र्यचित्रीकृतम्’ मायया ईश्वराधिष्ठितया कल्पितौ यौ देशकालौ तयोश्च कलना सम्बन्धस्तद्वैचित्र्येण चित्रीकृतं नानाविधभेदभिन्नतया विभक्तम्; ‘तं नामरूपाभ्यामेव व्याक्रियत’ इति श्रुतेः ।

(Tattvasudha, Swayamprakasa)

‘Bird eating *pippala* fruit’ is a well-known Upanishadic simile—‘*pippalam svādvatti*.’²⁵ The banyan seed will sprout only if it is first eaten by a bird. The seed must go through the body of a bird before it sprouts—this is the mysterious law for it. The *jīva* is the bird which perches in the tree of *saṃsāra* and eats its fruit. Its eating of *karmaphala* comes out as the huge *saṃsāra* tree. Again, another bird eats the fruit and carries the seed somewhere else. Thus continues this nonsense!

The seed of a banyan is a very tiny one and looking at it, one may wonder how such a huge tree with such a multitude of branches and leaves comes out of it. And each

²⁵ द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्ति अनश्नन्नन्योऽभिचाकशीति ॥

such tree produces thousands of seeds, and thus the cycle continues. Each of these tiny seeds contains within it the power to create a huge lineage of banyan trees. This power does not diminish even if one takes a seed after many generations. But if we look at a tiny seed on its own, could we imagine that within it lies such a huge banyan tree? Within the tiny seed is contained the possibility of a huge tree.

In Chandogya Upanishad, while initiating Svetaketu to the *mahāvākya* Tattvamasī, his father Uddhalaka tells him to bring a seed of the banyan. He is asked to break the seed open and inspect it. Svetaketu finds only some tiny grain-like particles within the seed.

"Break them too and look", says Uddhalaka. Uddhalaka then asks what he saw therein, to which the boy replies, "Nothing Lord." Then the father explains: "You say you see nothing, but it is from that nothing, my dear child, that this huge *vaṭavṛksha* has grown." In the same way, ***idaṃ jagat prāṇ-nirvikalpaṃ***. In the beginning, this universe remained without any duality; it existed as pure *Chit*. The ***aṅkura*** or sprout of creation remained in that Brahman-seed as pure consciousness. From 'That', such a huge *vaṭavṛksha* of a universe has appeared! From a state of *nirvikalpa*, by the sheer power of *māyā*, all the wonderful forces such as space and time have unfolded as if in a magic show.

Mystery of Time-Space

māyā-kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā—due to the deluding force of *māyā* we experience time, space, causation and so on. There is only one way for us to comprehend this. Every night, as we sleep, the whole universe vanishes for us. In deep sleep or *sushupti*, everything simply disappears. There is no world or body there; ‘I’, ‘mine’ and so forth are also not present there. We forget everything and sleep happily. Time too is absent there. ‘I went to sleep just now, but it is already morning!’ is what we feel. And as soon as we wake up, time, space and the world come back—**deśa-kāla-kalanā**. Time, space and causation engulf us. **kalanā** means ‘that which grasps’, or ‘that which keeps you under its spell’. ‘*kālaḥ kalayatāmaham*²⁶—I am time amongst those forces that swallow or grasp’, says Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita.

deśa, kāla and **kārya-kāraṇa bandha**—time, space and causation arrive as soon as the mind arises. **vaicitrya-citrī-kṛtam**—the whole universe appears spread out before us like a *chitra* (picture). It is *vichitra*—a mystery! How does it appear so? That is a mystery—**māyāviva vijṛmbhayati**. **māyāvi** means magician. **mahāyogīva**—like a *mahāyogi*. Some *mahāyogis* are also known to behave like magicians at times. Sage Viswamitra created a heavenly world for King Trisanku by the sheer power of his *tapas*. *Īśvara*’s creation is

²⁶ प्रह्लादश्चास्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलयतामहम्।
मृगाणां च मृगेन्द्रोऽहं वैनतेयश्च पक्षिणाम् ॥

by His 'Will'—*svecchayā*. No other cause can be attributed to Him. 'Creation happens by His sweet sportful will—*lokavattu līlākaivalyam*.'²⁷

There is no logical explanation for our dreams either. If we ask why we dream, there is no satisfactory answer. A person who is sleeping happily after a good meal, dreams as though he is wandering about in the wilderness, tired and hungry—why should he dream so? There is no answer if we ask 'why'. 'Why' is to be asked only in science, not in spiritual life. Why should he have such a dream? It just took place, that's all. There is no explanation for it. In the same way, whatever happens in our life or in the world, we cannot give any reasoning for it. The question 'why' has no relevance even in our ordinary lives. As situations unfold and when miseries visit us, no amount of asking 'why' will give us answers. In Bhagavata, Bhishma advises as follows.

न ह्यस्य कर्हिचिद्राजन्पुमान्वेद विधित्सितम् ।

यद्विजिज्ञासया युक्ता मुह्यन्ति कवयोऽपि हि ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata 1.9.16)

O King, no one can know, explore and find out why the Lord is acting in such a way as the *kālapurusha*; why things happen like this in life, no one can explain! Even deep thinkers and great intellectuals get deluded trying to find answers for such things.

²⁷ Brahma Sutra 2.1.33

It is a *līla* (sport)—is all that can be said. ***māyāvīva vijṛmbhayatyapi mahā-yogīva yaḥ svecchayā***—that *māyā* is the power of *Īśvara*. He never comes under its spell. '*māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ vidyānmāyinaṃ ca maheśvaram*.'²⁸ It means '*māyā* is *Īśvara*'s nature; it is His feminine power, and He is the lord of Her. She is His illusion and He, the illusionist.' This is all just a magic show—'*gandharvapaṭṭanam; indrajālopamaṃ*'²⁹—like the illusion of a city of *gandharvas* displayed by a magician.' There is no point in searching for a reason for this appearance of the world. Without putting our attention on all this, we must learn to turn our attention to the One who is doing all this, the One in whom all this happens. Do not place your attention on the world; turn it towards the inner Reality—*Ātman*.

The Story of Creation

'How did creation happen?'—this is perhaps the most haunting question for all thinking minds. Many theories have been propounded about creation in all religions as well as in science, and each of them is vastly different. Each explanation has been according to the time and intellect of the people. In our *purāṇas*, it is said that Brahma appeared from the navel of the Lord and then created the world. For those who have faith in *purāṇas*, this by itself will be

²⁸ Svetasvatara Upanishad 4.10

²⁹ Srimad Bhagavata

satisfactory. Vedas give a more elaborate description for creation: “From Ātman came *ākāśa* (space), from *ākāśa* came *vāyu* (air), from *vāyu* came *agni* (fire), from *agni* came *jala* (water), and from *jala* came *pṛthvī* (earth). From the earth, came herbs (*oshadhi*) and from these came all the creatures.” This is but one of the many explanations in Veda. In another place, the three elements *teja*, *āpa* and *anna* are considered as the basic elements of the world—*Trivritkaraṇa Śruti*. And in yet another place the Vedas themselves ask in amazement, “What is this creation? What was there before creation? Who knows!”

नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीं नासीद्रजो नोव्योमा परोयत्...

को आद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचत्कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः ।

अर्वाग्देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनाथा को वेद यत आबभूव ॥

इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।

यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

(Nasadiya Suktam, Rig Veda)

Existence was not there, nor non-existence.

Neither earth nor sky; something beyond!

Darkness remained embracing darkness.

Who knows? Alas! Who has spoken?

Where from this projection happened?

Perhaps the one Supreme Being

In the transcendental space alone knows

Or perhaps He Himself is unaware!

Vedamātā Tells Tales

Since there are many explanations for creation even in the Vedas, Sankaracharya himself does some elaborate reflection on why this is so. In one place it is explained in one way, and in another place in another way. His conclusion is this—as long as the inquisitiveness about creation prevails within us, there will be a disturbance in the brain; and all these explanations are given so as to silence that curiosity in whatever manner possible. In Semitic religions, there is a theological explanation that the Lord created the world in seven days—this simple explanation satisfies many. But there are many others who do not accept this. Intellectuals may be satisfied by the scientist's tale of the Big Bang theory. If some theory is given, at least for the time being, people will get satisfied and remain calm, and the mind too will become still. That is the reason for these multitude of explanations.

*'avivakṣitaḥ iha sṛṣṭikramah.*³⁰ The Vedas are not interested in speaking about creation or its cause. Then what is the intention of Vedamātā in giving us so many explanations for it? It is like this: a child tells the mother, "If you want me to eat, then tell me a story." The child must be fed somehow, and so the mother begins a tale: "Once there was an unborn woman, and to her, two children were born. One of these never appeared in the world, and the other

³⁰ Chandogya Bhashya 8.2.3

never even entered the womb of the mother. Once, the two went on a pilgrimage. They took with them a bag made of air, clothes made of space, and a knife made of the horn of a rabbit. They went to a desert which was full of water, very cool water..." Thus, the story goes on and the child keeps listening agog with interest, saying 'hmmm, hmmm', and eating the food all the while. This is the purpose.

If the child were to ask right at the beginning, 'How can an unborn woman beget children?', then the story will immediately come to a full stop. The joy of the story lies in the innocence. The child has full faith in its mother and hence there will be no doubt. Moreover, there is also the happiness of listening to a story as the hunger gets appeased. This is the purpose. In this way, we too are like children. In order to temporarily quieten our minds, Vedamātā, out of her compassion, tells us many stories about creation.

Glory of the Primordial *Brahmavidyā*

यो ब्रह्माणं विदधाति पूर्वं यो वै वेदांश्च प्रहिणोति तस्मै ।

तं ह देवमात्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणमहं प्रपद्ये ॥

(Swetaswataropanisad 6.18)

The One who first made Brahma manifest out of Himself, and transmitted the Vedas to Him, to that indweller who illumines the Self and the intellect, I, the seeker, surrender.

In Srimad Bhagavata, it is only after teaching Brahmavidyā that the Lord instructs Brahma to start creation. The crux of the matter is that, if one admits creation as something that has happened, then, Brahmavidyā was already present even before such a creation. Brahmavidyā is not something invented by someone one fine day like the scientific inventions of the world. It is ever-present, and again and again each one has to unearth it afresh for himself. Just one person gaining this knowledge will not suffice for all, however. Each one needs to bring it into his own direct experience.

सिद्धान्तोऽध्यात्मशास्त्राणां सर्वापहव एव हि ।

नाविद्यास्तीह नो माया शान्तं ब्रह्मेदमाततम् ॥

(Yoga Vasishtha 6.125.1)

The purpose of all Vedantic scriptures is to negate everything other than Brahman. In fact, there is neither *avidyā* nor *māyā*. Everything is Brahman. This is the ultimate truth.

The purpose of *Vedānta* is not to expound upon subjects such as *māyā*, *avidyā*, the world and its creation. Its only intention is to give *Ātmajñāna*. However, to begin with, explanations are given to remove obstacles to right knowledge. Ultimately, nothing exists other than Brahman—the Ultimate Truth. It is only upon reaching a higher plane, will one have the insight that what is seen outside is a projection of the image which is within. If this is revealed before one is ready for it, one may not be able to

comprehend it; and it may even confuse the seeker further. Hence, all these explanations are given to appease us—that's all. But in truth, the entire universe arises, remains and merges back in Ātman. Ātman alone exists. Whatever is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt are all nothing but Ātman. '*ātmaivedaṃ sarvaṃ*—all this is Ātman alone' is the declaration of the Upanishad.

In the beginning Ātman alone existed—the One without a second, *ekameva advitīyam*; then, the world appeared. But the world is nothing but Ātman with names and forms. In *praḷaya*, all the names and forms merge in existence-consciousness-bliss and only pure awareness, Ātman, remains. *Samādhi* or realisation is *nityapraḷaya*—the Eternal deluge. Once you realise the Ātman there is no more creation for you. Timelessly you repose in the Self.

Here I am reminded of a *mahātma* who lived in Thiruvananthapuram. His name was Balakrishnan. He was a man of experience and a perfect *Vedānta Jñāni*. He has written *bhāshyas* for almost all *prakaraṇas*, Upanishads, Gita, Brahma Sutra, Yoga Vasishta and many other texts. Upon reading a verse written by me, he expressed to one of his disciples his wish to see me. Thus, I was taken to him.

The moment he saw me, he held my shoulder and gazed for almost ten minutes with visible awe and affection. Then he said, "*ekameva advitīyam, neha nānāsti kincana*—One whole alone is; not even a speck of duality exists.

Swami! How fortunate! *bhāgyam, mahābhāgyam!* Such young age! *Brahmanishṭha* is blossoming in you so beautifully. Do not accept the existence of anything else. *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta swabhāvam brahma*. That is you. Stay in this always. Do not bother about even livelihood. Everything will come to you. Compassionately give this to all. *yatra sāyantana griha*—wherever we reach in the evening is our home. Go on and on and proclaim this truth to all. Let those who have ears listen. Let the heedless go. Bother not. Move about and give this healing *tīrtha* to all.”



Chapter Three

THE POWER OF *Satsanga*

There are two ways of *upadeśa*. One is *sāmpradāyika* and the other is *yādrichchika*. *Sāmpradāyika* is the traditional way where a mature disciple approaches a *Śrotriya Brahmanishṭha* and receives *upadeśa*. This is prescribed by the Upanishad thus:

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

(Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12)

Having examined the worlds achieved through *karma*, the seeker should acquire freedom from all desires and come to dispassion, reflecting that the Eternal cannot be gained by *karma*. Therefore, to attain knowledge, he must properly approach, with *samit* (sacred twigs) in hand, a Guru who is well-versed in the scriptures and established in Brahman.

Yādrichchika is unexpected. It is the work of *Ātmaśakti*—power of the Self. This is expressed thus in Bhagavata:

अनाद्यविद्योपहतात्मसंविदस्तन्मूलसंसारपरिश्रमातुराः ।
यदृच्छयोपसृता यमाप्नुयुर्विमुक्तिदो नः परमो गुरुर्भवान् ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata 8.24.4)

Beginningless ignorance clouds the experience of the Self. Due to it, miserable beings toil endlessly. By Thy grace, O Lord, somehow when they surrender to Thee,

Thou appear before them instantaneously as Guru and give them liberation!

The anecdotes such as that of Satyakama and Upakosala are examples for this phenomenon in *Śruti*.

***Satsaṅga* itself means *Mahāvākya-upadeśa*. Every look and breath of a knower of Brahman is *Tattvamasi upadeśa*.**

A few years back we had our camp at Hardwar. At that time, a few of us made a visit to Hrishikesh. There on the banks of Ganga, we saw the well-known *Śrotriya Brahmanishṭha*—Dandiswami, sitting naked on the sands, gazing at Ganga. When we sat before him, he held me in his vision and uttered all the four *Mahāvākyas* and explained them in Saṃskṛta and in Hindi. This of course happened when I was not seeking any *upadeśa*. But I felt, ‘Yes, it is Lord’s way of bestowing *Satsaṅga*.’

This was *yadrichcha*—a happening. At that time, I was already beyond any wants and had gone there only to have his *darśan*. Nobody was there to introduce me to him either. So, this was divine will.

आह स्फुटं तत्त्वमसीति वेदस्तथाप्यसंप्राप्य परात्मनिष्ठाम् ।

भूयो विचारो मतिदुर्बलत्वं तत्सर्वदा स्वात्मतया हि भाति ॥

(Saddarsanam 34)

“Once heard, you should abide in Ātman without ignorance, doubt or misapprehension; if you continue *vichāra* even after, then it is due to lack of intelligence and faith”, says Bhagavan Ramana.

But most of us need repeated hearing and reflection. Acharya himself has spoken about this elaborately in the commentary of the Sutra 'āvṛttirasakṛdupadeśāt'.³¹ This is the subject of the next verse.



³¹ Brahma Sutra 4.1.1

VERSE THREE

यस्यैव स्फुरणं सदात्मकमसत्कल्पार्थगं भासते
 साक्षात्तत्त्वमसीति वेदवचसा यो बोधयत्याश्रितान् ।
 यत्साक्षात्करणाद्भवेन्न पुनरावृत्तिर्भवाम्भोनिधौ
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ ३ ॥

*yasyaiva sphuraṇaṁ sadātmakam-asat-kalpārthagaṁ bhāsate
 sākṣāt-tattvamasīti veda-vacasā yo bodhayatyāśritān ।
 yat-sākṣāt-karaṇād-bhavenna punarāvṛttir-bhavāmbhonidhau
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥ 3 ॥*

His *sphuraṇa*, ever reveals itself as simple existence—*sadātmaka*. Illumined by Him, the unreal appears to be real. To those who have surrendered to Him, He imparts direct enlightenment through the Vedic statement, ‘*TATTVAMASI*—That Thou Art’, by realising which, one no more returns to the ocean of becoming. To Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

Ever experienced as existence, *sadātmaka*, is the Self
 The most intimate immediate Truth of one’s Beingness
 In sleep where nothingness seems to prevail—the thing in itself Is.
 His undeniable Beingness illumines all unreal names and forms
 To those who surrender unconditionally to Him
 He, the Silent Lord, transmits the *vedavākya* ‘*TATTVAMASI*’
 Realising THAT, one no more slips back into the ocean of becoming
 Guru Dakshinamurti, the blazing fire of *Jñāna*, is our refuge.

YOU ARE THE LIGHT

yasyaiva sphuraṇaṃ sadātmakaṃ asat kalpārthagaṃ bhāsate—the one who shines forth as ‘sat’—simple existence, and by whose effulgence all the unreal objects shine, **yaḥ sākṣāt tattvamasi iti vedavacasā āśritān bodhayati**—and to the śishya who takes refuge in him, he gives the knowledge “**Tattvamasi**”—You are That. “That which you are searching for, is you yourself!” **bodhayati**—in this way, he makes one aware. **yat sākṣāt karaṇāt bhavāmbhonidhau, punaḥ āvṛttirḥ na bhavet**—to those who have realised this, there shall no more be a birth in this ocean of saṃsāra. **tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye**—to that Guru Dakshinamurti, who bestows this divine knowledge, is this *namaskāra*!

asat kalpārthagaṃ bhāsate—this entire creation, which in essence is unreal, is illumined by His Light. Here, the subject of discussion is *viśvam*, indicated in the beginning of the hymn. The universe, devoid of the effulgence of the Self, is *asat-kalpa*—unreal. It shines forth as real by the light of consciousness behind the seer’s intellect. That with which the universe is seen is the eye of consciousness. The Upanishads call it *prajñā-netra*. It is because of the light of that EYE, everything else becomes known.

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

(Kathopanishad 15)

There the sun shines not, nor the moon nor the stars.

This lightning also does not shine there.

Then what to speak of fire?

Illumined by His supreme effulgence all these shine forth.

असत्कल्पेषु भावेषु जडेषु क्षणनाशिषु ।

अस्तित्वं च प्रकाशत्वं नित्यात्संक्रामतीश्वरात् ॥ (Manasollasa 3.2)

To the manifestations, which in essence are unreal and momentary, Existence and Effulgence are transmitted from the sole eternal Reality—*Īśvara*.

The *satyatva*—reality of the world, is fully dependent on the reality of the SELF. Hence the Self is *satyasya satyam*—the reality behind all that is real.

आत्मसत्तैव सत्तैषां भावानां न ततोऽधिका ।

तथैव स्फुरणं चैषां नात्मस्फुरणतोऽधिकम् ॥ (Manasollasa 3.3)

The principle of existence behind all these manifestations is nothing but the existence of Ātman—the *sat*. The awareness behind these is also of Ātman alone—the *Chit*.

One realises the Ātman the instant Guru indicates it—the *śishya* gains *aparoksha anubhava*. *Aparokshānubhava* means **immediate** or **instantaneous** experience. When the lamp is lit, it catches fire at once, does it not? In the same manner, at the very instant the teaching is given, there is the recognition—‘*soham asmi! I am that!*’ That is *pratyabhijñā*. ‘I am that pure Consciousness, that which is limitless and

whole', is the nature of that experience. '*navo navo'yaṃ satataṃ munīndraḥ*'³²—the sage who has found his real Self is dead to the ego and is born afresh into infinity. He is fresh every moment. This realisation is like a new birth. In fact, this is a birth into eternity.

Here, what does the Guru do? *tattvamasīti vedavacasā yo bodhayatyāśritān*—to the *śishya* who takes refuge in him, he gives the knowledge (*tattva*), "You are Whole, eternal; you have neither birth nor death", and whatever state he is in, he makes the *śishya* too remain in it. Whatever he is, he gives to the disciple. There is no more 'two'. He gives his own experience to the disciple just as a lamp is lit from another lamp! Will there be any difference between the two lamps? The second lamp will burn just as bright as the first lamp. In this way, the Guru gives his own experience to the mature disciple.

yat sākṣāt karaṇād bhavenna punarāvṛttirḥ bhavāmbhonidhau—to those who have realised this, there shall be no more birth in this ocean of *saṃsāra*. Birth is mere illusion. It is another name for death. Body is another name for death. Know that you are the body-less Self. Now, here, you are free of birth, death, disease and all miseries of life. Here and now you have *Nirvāṇa*.

³² Sri Ramana Hridayam 57

The Hidden Treasure

This *śloka* can be interpreted in a different way as well, which is not mentioned in the *vārttika*. **yasya sphuraṇam**—whose revelation is of the form of **sadātmaka**—mere existence or ‘IS-ness’. Even in the deep sleep state His existence or ‘IS-ness’ remains unaffected. We make the error of mistaking the deep sleep state to be **asatkālpa** because of the absence of all objects including the intellect. *kālpa* means ‘looking like’. So, **asatkālpa** means ‘similar to non-existence’. As we consider only names and forms as the indication of existence and take their absence to be its cessation, we fail to recognise the greatest treasure which is available as **sanmātra** (see the sixth verse) in deep sleep. It is only when all the disturbances created by thoughts cease and the mind becomes absolutely quiet, will one recognise the full force of Being-ness—**sanmātrata**—in the waking itself. This is *Samādhi*.

All have the experience ‘I am’. In the waking state, the body is there, mind is there, and I am there. In dream, the body is not there, the mind alone is working, and I am there. In *sushupti*, the body is not there, the mind is not there—am I there? When asked, “Were you there in deep sleep?” many feel doubtful and reply, “I was not there in deep sleep.” It is true that the person ‘me’ who is seen while awake or while dreaming is found missing while asleep. However, is it a nothingness that we feel in deep sleep? Is the missing of the self-image, extinction of our beingness? ‘**asatkālpa**’ means

‘appears as if *asat* or nothing’. We may say that there is nothing in sleep. But we feel happy and whole there. **“From that nothing, everything has come. That is Truth, that is Ātman, and you are That—*Tattvamasi*”**, says Chandogya Upanishad. It is of the nature of simple existence—*sadātmakam*. Pure existence, uncorrupted by anything else, is present there. ‘IS-ness’ is there. Existence can never give up its IS-ness. The deep sleep state is the best intimation of the ‘bodiless presence’ of IS-ness.

YOU ARE THAT

In Chandogya Upanishad, there is a story in which Indra and Virochana went to Prajapati seeking Self-knowledge and Prajapati started teaching them. In order to test them, at the very beginning itself, he told them that Ātman is what is seen in a reflection. Satisfied with this, Virochana went away with the understanding that the body is Ātman. Not satisfied with this explanation, Indra came back and questioned this. Prajapati continued to teach him, but after each instruction Indra came back unsatisfied.

Gliding beyond waking and dream, finally, he was made to peep into the state of deep sleep. Then Indra said, “I am not there as a person. I don’t do anything there. I don’t attain anything there—*nāhamatra bhogyam pasyāmi*.³³ I

³³ Chandogya Upanishad Bhashya 8.9.11

don't see anything complete there, neither do I see anything enjoyable.”

Bhagavatpada says in the *bhashya*, ‘*swalpastu doṣastavāvaśiṣṭaḥ*—there is just a small *doṣa*, a misconception, a flaw in his understanding.’ Indra had almost reached the Truth, but he missed realisation by the distance of a breath. He had failed to recognise the Beingness in deep sleep. He believed that he should attain realisation while retaining his identity as Indra. He sought to attain the Whole, Brahman, while continuing to remain as a person. ‘This is not good for Indra—*na tvetadindrasya hitam*’, says Sankaracharya. The teacher ought not cater to the already harmful pride of the disciple. ‘*hitam ca indrasya prajāpatinā vaktavyam*.’ Prajapati ought to teach only that which will benefit Indra. That ‘thing’ needed to be pointed out and brought to his notice.

Thus, as per the story, Indra continued to live with the Master and contemplated further. At last, Prajapati gave him the final initiation by showing to him—‘*aśarīraṃ vāva santaṃ na priyāpriye spṛśataḥ*, the one who remains in the state of bodilessness, does not get affected by likes and dislikes’. In sleep, you are without the ego—this personality with which you are totally identified. There, devoid of that personality, you exist as *sat-chit-ānanda*, Existence-Awareness-Bliss. After explaining thus, the Guru finally gave Indra the *upadeśa*: ‘*Tattvamasi*’. This time Indra did deep

reflection on the state of *sushupti* and realised the Self as Brahman.

Churning for Fire

To invoke fire, Agnihotris churn two *araṇi* sticks together. This process is the rubbing of two fire-sticks together—one stick above and the other below. Similar is the churning between the Guru and the disciple; the resultant friction will bring forth a spark and ignite the flame of absolute recognition.

In a place near our native village, lived an enlightened Master, Swami Ramananda. Though blind, he had wonderful methods of communication. Once, he instructed one of his *śishyas* to reflect deeply on *sushupti*. After doing *manana* for a long time, the *śishya* came back and said, “Swami, I did not find any happiness in *sushupti*, and I also lose my identity there! In realisation, shouldn't I be gaining something positive, instead of a simple absence of sorrow?” After listening to these contentions, the Guru continued the intense session on the nature of Reality till late into the night and finally allowed the completely exhausted *śishya* to go and sleep.

Hardly an hour had passed before the Guru shook him awake and said, “Come on, wake up! I will initiate you into the ultimate Realisation now.” Yearning to go back to sleep, the *śishya* pleaded, “Swami, I do not want anything now; neither *mukti* nor anything else! Please allow me to go back

to sleep.” The Master said, “Only a few hours ago you had asked me for self-realisation, and now you are saying that you do not want it!” Śishya replied, “Please Master, sleep is so sweet now. Let us have our session in the morning. Kindly allow me to go back to sleep now!”

The Guru replied with a smile, “You say that you are afraid of losing yourself, but in *sushupti*, you were not there—you had lost yourself; then why do you love it so much that you prefer it over *mukti*?” Śishya—“There is such a feeling of release in that state, Master!” Guru—“Yes, we get a taste of the bliss of the Self during *sushupti*. Come on, wake up. Now is the time to reflect. Contemplate on that *sukha* where the ‘I’ is not. It is not a personal pleasure hitherto experienced by you. It is impersonal joy. You will not get it by sleeping, but you can certainly get it by reflecting on that state. Reflection on the state of deep sleep will make the *samādhi* state bloom in you.” By the grace of the sage Ramananda Swami, the disciple woke up to his real nature.

This is how the Master turns our attention inwards, where it normally fails to go. Mere lectures will not do. But when it is indicated by a *deśika*, we look at it immediately—here and now. Once the inner one is recognised, whatever is found there, is the real meaning of the term ‘I’.

***Sushupti* is only a state but realisation is not a state. It is ever our real nature.** Contemplating on the deep sleep state helps us to break the spell of waking and dream. But

we have to learn to see beyond 'sleep'. Exploring sleep is memory; but realisation is not possible in memory. It must happen here and now, in the present state, as pure awareness—*chit swarūpa*.

अहम्पदार्थस्त्वहमादिसाक्षी नित्यं सुषुप्तावपि भावदर्शनात् ।

ब्रूते ह्यजो नित्य इति श्रुतिः स्वयं तत्प्रत्यगात्मा सदसद्विलक्षणः ॥

(Vivekachudamani 294)

The real sense of 'I' (*aham-pada-artha*), is the pure Awareness which is a witness to all the manifestations beginning from the ego. It exists even in deep sleep.

Both the subject and the objects are recognised by the Consciousness, which is one's real nature. *Śruti* declares it to be the birthless, the eternal.

The Truth Eternal

What is available even in the deep sleep state is something which we constantly ignore, but if we pay attention to that, that itself is enough for the highest beatitude. This is Bhagavan Ramana's first instruction in the book 'Who am I'—"Everyone wants to avoid suffering and desires only happiness. Every day, in deep sleep, all experience that happiness. If we wish to bring about that happiness in waking state, we must take up the enquiry, 'Who am I?'"

In *sushupti* there is no sense of 'I'; on waking up, the ego 'I' arises, and as soon as it arises, you are separated from

the source. If one traces wherefrom this *aḥam vṛtti* arises, the *Hṛdaya sthānam* (heart-centre) will be unveiled and we will experience *sushupti* in the waking state itself. But it is no more called *sushupti* as the sleep element is not there. It is the fourth state—*turiya*. That limitless awareness, that Truth alone is wholeness—‘*ekātmapratyayasāraṃ prapañcomasāmaṃ śāntaṃ śivaṃ advaitaṃ*’, declares Mandukya Upanishad.

The so-called fourth state, *turiya*, is in fact not a state—it is the substratum for the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. It is Realisation that transcends the waking, dream and deep sleep states. During waking and dream states, our involvement with what is perceived is so strong that we fail to notice this changeless substratum that is ever-present behind them. In deep sleep, even though that alone remains, we fail to recognise it as we are not conscious. During the still hours of meditation, as we keep diving deeper inwards, often we may get flashes or sparks of understanding.

Vedānta, the way in which it has been given by the Upanishads, is complete knowledge. The most astonishing aspect of the teaching is that there is nothing new to attain, become or even know. Consider this—if we do manage to attain something new, it may not stay; we may lose it any time. So, it has to be that which is present always. See how powerful this reasoning is—if Truth is something that is eternal and if it always exists, then it must exist even now! It

should be here and now! It should be known here, in this moment—‘*iha cedavedīdatha satyamasti na cediḥāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ*,³⁴ if one has realised here, then there is truth; if one has not realised here, then there is great loss’, says Kenopanishad. One has to recognise it ‘now’, otherwise you’ll miss it for eternity.

Revelation of the Self

Sankaracharya tells a story in *bhashya*: “Once, a prince got lost in a forest in his childhood, and was taken in by a group of hunters who lived there. They brought him up as one of their own. Ignorant about his royal lineage, the prince took himself to be a hunter and lived accordingly. Many years hence, a minister found this unusually bright youngster living amongst the hunters, and upon enquiry, realised that the man was none other than the lost prince. Soon, the minister provided the necessary evidence and convinced him about his royal lineage. Thus, the moment he was convinced of the truth, he lost the delusion that he was the son of a hunter and woke up to his real identity. Giving up the life of a hunter, he accepted the life of a prince which was his hereditary right. The identification ‘I am a Prince’ became spontaneous and natural to him.”

In the same manner, this *jīva* gets separated from Brahman like a spark from the fire, gets into the body-mind

³⁴ Kenopanishad 2.5

complex, and thinks 'I am a *saṁsāri*' and follows the ways of the world. He identifies himself with the conglomeration of the body and the sense organs, and thinks variously: 'I am thin', 'I am fat', 'I am happy', or 'I am sad'. Thus, without knowing his true Self, he leads a life of misery.

When the kind-hearted Master comes and instructs him by saying, 'You are none of these. You are the Supreme Brahman, you are not of this world', the *jīva* gives up the threefold cravings, gets enlightened and realises, 'I am that Supreme Brahman which is beyond *saṁsāra*.' The *jīva* gets firmly established in Brahman just as the prince of the story spontaneously accepted his status as a prince. It is never possible for a spark to essentially get separated from fire. You are also like that—it is not possible for the pure Supreme Self to accept even a trace of worldliness.

To gain THAT LIGHT which is within oneself, we spend our whole life wandering about searching to see whether one will get it from here or there, whether one can achieve it through this or that *sādhana*, whether one can get it from this or that Guru, whether one should look for it in this or that book! Finally, when we become exhausted and yearn from the bottom of the heart, the Lord appears as the Sat-Guru and awakens us to the glory of our own *swarūpa*. Then the great release, great relaxation, and complete repose sets in.

You are the LION—Wake Up and Roar!

yasyaiva sphuraṇaṃ sadātmakam—it is eternally pulsating within as ‘*aham, aham*’. In between our thoughts and amidst our perceptions, there is the unchanging experience ‘I am’. It is with the luminosity of that alone, all the other objects of the universe are lit up. **asatkalpārthagaṃ bhāsate**—by whose light all that is unreal or *asatkalpa*, is seen as real. They are *asatkalpa*—unreal, because they were not in the beginning and neither will they prevail in the end. In between they appear as real.

आदावन्ते च यन्नास्ति वर्तमानेऽपि तत्तथा ।

वितथैः सदृशाः सन्तोऽवितथा इव लक्षिताः ॥

(Mandukya Karika 2.6)

If a thing is non-existent both in the beginning and in the end, it is necessarily non-existent in the present. The objects that we see are really like illusions; still they are regarded as real. Such a world is felt real due to the luminosity of Ātman.

Guru does not give anything new. He simply reveals the state he is in and tells the *śishya*, “You and I are not different from each other.” To exemplify this, Sri Ramakrishna often used to tell a story about a deluded lion cub. Once, in a forest lived a flock of sheep; and in that flock, a sheep had given birth to a lamb and cared for it. One day, a pregnant lioness attacked this flock, but during the attack, the lioness herself fell on a sharp tree stump and died; her stomach tore open and a little lion cub fell out. This lion cub was lovingly

taken in by the flock of sheep and was cared for by the mother sheep as if it were her own child. Days went by—the lion cub grew bigger and stronger and tried its best to behave like the other sheep. Soon, it was sent to the sheep-school along with the other lambs. There they were taught many things—how to bleat properly, which grass and herbs were the best to eat and so on. Though the lion cub tried his best to bleat like a sheep, it got scolded for making such frightening roars! It never felt at home amongst all the other lambs and would often get bored and fall asleep at school.

One day, the lambs were taught that the lions were ferocious predators who would hunt and eat them. The moment the lion cub heard the word 'LION', he became alert and his hair stood on end. He had a strong intimation that there was some connection between the lion and him. Even though the elderly sheep recounted many dreadful stories about their encounters with the savage lions, the lion cub was only enthralled by them and longed to hear more.

One day, as they were grazing, this lion cub was noticed by a lion; it observed this strange lion cub moving alongside the other sheep, eating grass along with them and even bleating almost like a sheep, with effort. The lion was unable to tolerate this and resolved to release this lion cub from its pathetic life as a sheep. The lion cub too got a glimpse of the majestic lion, and in that one glimpse, its whole being woke up to an inexplicable thrill. The glimpse of one's real nature seen manifest in another opened the doors of dreams in the

lion cub. But it felt helpless as it was unable to remove the thought of being a lamb having been conditioned that way since birth—neither could it forget about the lion.

A brooding current about the lion held the lion cub's mind throughout that night. Although the mother sheep warned him to stay away from the terrible lion, the lion cub secretly hoped to see the lion again. The next day, on his own, the lion too came in search of this lion cub; it jumped in front of the lion cub, caught hold of him, roared loudly, declaring, "You are not a lamb; you are a lion!" Although excited by this fantastic declaration, the young lion wriggled out and ran off in panic.

He continued to spend all his time thinking about the lion and its words and felt ecstatic to think of himself as a lion. The next day, the lion cub went in search of the lion. The lion too was lying in wait for him. Here began the relationship with its real nature. The lion told the young one, **"You are Me, know this for certain."** Leading the young lion to a nearby pond, the lion pointed to its reflection in the water and said, **"See, you are just like me. Now stop bleating; wake up, and roar!"** The lion cub recognised its true identity and let out a big roar. So too, all of you are nothing but the ever free, ever pure Ātman. Accept this, and live in that light. To roar is to ignore all miseries as mere illusion.

Within all of us is the eternally free Self with just a cloud of ignorance covering it. In fact, this flimsy ignorance has no power to hide our Self. Listen and accept this teaching of *Vedānta*. Your vague recollection of the inner being will come out from behind the cloud as the blazing sun. That which is already known is what the Guru points out—**‘Tattvamasi! Here and now, you are That.’**

Dehypnotise Yourself

In Vivekachudamani, the Guru says as he gives the teaching:

जातिनीतिकुलगोत्रदूरगं नामरूपगुणदोषवर्जितम् ।

देशकालविषयातिवर्ति यद्ब्रह्म तत्त्वमसि भावयात्मनि ॥

(Vivekachudamani 255)

Free from all bodily limitations shines the *śuddha chit* (pure Consciousness). Repeatedly meditate upon it. You are That. *‘Brahma tattvamasi bhāvayātmani’*—keep bringing this into your *bhāva* and repeatedly meditate on it.

**Ever-pristine, untouched by caste or creed,
Laws or lineage, name or form, good or bad,
Beyond time and space, It shines by Itself
That Brahman you are—Tattvamasi. Meditate!**

When a mature seeker listens to *Vedānta vākyas*, something very deep awakens in him. Many have experienced this during the Jñāna Yoga lectures of Swami Vivekananda in the West. They were used to being

addressed as 'sinners', but in stark contrast, Swami told them, "You are all eternal, whole, pure; you have neither birth nor death; calling you sinners is the only sin." As they heard these words, many fell into an ecstatic state. However, as they returned to normal awareness, their intellect could not accept that most enthralling experience as true. As they exited the hall, they discussed amongst themselves and felt that they were being hypnotised in some way and that they should not fall prey to it.

The next day, as the talk was going on, a girl got up in protest and alleged: "Sir, you are hypnotising us!" Swami Vivekananda replied: "My dear child, I am not hypnotising you, I am only de-hypnotising you. You are already hypnotised; I am only waking you up. You are dreaming—'I am a man, I am a woman, I am suffering, I have birth, I have death' and so on. You are in that dream, and I am waking you up."

When you recognise that you are indeed Whole, that very moment you get absolute release from all sorrows. The experience 'I am' is the centre where Eternity, omniscience, Brahman is revealed. Attention should be focused on that experience. Considering the ego real is the primal error. If we accept the ego as real, it will impose non-existing limitations on us and will delude us further and make us toil unnecessarily to transcend them. The tussle to be free of the ego is itself based on ignorance. The ego is not real.

The primary teaching is, “You are That!” **Tattvamasi** alone is the *upadeśa vākya*. **Prajñānam Brahma** is a statement. **Aham Brahmāsmi** is personal experience. **Ayam Ātmā Brahma** is *sarvātma bhāva*; it is also a statement. So, **Tattvamasi** alone is the teaching. When the disciple approaches the Master with yearning, the Master declares ‘You are That!’ Beholding the horror of *saṃsāra*, the disciple approaches the Master. Birth, death, disease, separation from dear ones and so on are seen by him like a fire raging all around. In one instant, the Master makes him wake up from this horrible dream to the timeless realm of bliss with one word—**Tattvamasi!**

The State of No-otherness

The Sage remains peacefully reposed in himself at all times. Neither does he regard himself as anything other than the Self nor does he regard the disciple as different from the Self. A *Jñāni* never looks upon a seeker as an ignorant one. He has the x-ray vision to behold the ‘all-knowing One’ hiding behind the cloud of ignorance in the seeker’s heart.

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्यैष महिमा भुवि ।

दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योमन्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ॥

मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं संनिधाय ।

तद्विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा आनन्दरूपममृतं यद्विभाति ॥

(Mundakopanishad 2.2.7-8)

The one who is the knowing principle behind all knowledge, the one who knows all and the all of

everything, it is verily His glory that manifests in this world. Established in *Brahmapura*—the inner space of the Heart, He is the monitor behind *prāṇa* and body, and is clothed by the mind. With His seat in the Heart, He lives within matter. The Realised Ones know Him, and for them, He shines forth as the Self inside everyone—blissful and immortal.

Our general belief is that only if we see the other as ignorant can we teach them. But in *Vedānta*, the most important precept is that if one takes the other to be ignorant, one may of course teach him but not transmit the experience. “You are the Self; your very nature is *Jñāna*; you are already Whole”—this is the vision of a *Jñāni*. If even for a moment, the Master looks upon the disciple as an ignorant one, he himself would slip from his state of Self-abidance. So, *ananyadṛshṭi*—seeing none other than the Self, is ‘the sign’ of a Master. Such a Master is very rare! He has truly cast aside otherness—*anyabhāva*. The might of such a state is that, one word from such a Sage is enough to illumine a mature seeker!

Knowing ‘I am Brahman’ does not mean that I alone am Brahman; the entire world is That; everyone is That. The moment we wake up to that experience, everything will take on that same lustre. Even when we do *manana* on this experience, we must train ourselves to see all as potentially divine. There is no ignorance whatsoever. All are of the nature of Ātman—“*ātmaivedamidaṃ sarvam*. All are Ātman;

there is nothing apart from it. All are That alone", says Chandogya Upanishad. Accepting the inherent perfection in all and training oneself to see that in all, everywhere and always, is meditation. Such meditation will soon make you live ever in light.



Chapter Four

THE LIGHT WITHIN

In the first *śloka* we began with '*viśvam*', the universe, as a reflection '*darpaṇa-dṛśya-māna-nagarī*' (like a city seen in a mirror). In the next *śloka*, we saw that it is only *māyā* that projects the world and the people we see outside and that the same *māyā* is in us as our mind—from world we came to the mind. In the third *śloka*, we saw that, that which illumines the mind is our true Self. In the fourth *śloka*, which is next, it is shown more clearly how the Truth shines within us, even while enclosed in the *upādhi* of bodily limitations. It is pointed out through the example of a bright lamp kept enclosed within a pot.

In Brahma Sutra, there is a *sutra* that speaks about this inner light—*jyotiścaraṇābhīdhānāt*. The *charaṇa* or feet that are spoken about here are the waking, dream and the deep sleep states; and the fourth is *turīya*. Puruṣa sukta says, "*pādosya viśvā bhūtāni*—the entire universe and the creatures are only one foot or one-fourth part of that light, whereas *tripādasyāmṛtandivi*—the remaining three-fourth remains immortal in the divine realm." Here, *Śruti* speaks about '*pāda*'. The *jyoti* that is referred to in the Brahma Sutra is that which shines forth in all the three states and which alone remains in the fourth state of *turīya* as well. This inner light is Brahman. Chandogya Upanishad speaks about

the same as 'idaṃ vāva tadyadidamasminnantah puruṣe jyotiḥ.'³⁵

There is an interesting account in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad regarding this.³⁶ It is in the form of a dialogue between King Janaka and the great Upanishadic sage Yajnavalkya.

याज्ञवल्क्य किञ्ज्योतिरयं पुरुष इति । आदित्यज्योतिः सम्राडिति
होवाचादित्येनैवायं ज्योतिषास्ते पल्ययते कर्म कुरुते
विपल्येतीत्येवमेवैतद्याज्ञवल्क्य ॥

Janaka: Yajnavalkya, what serves as the light for a man?

Yajnavalkya: The light of the sun, O Emperor. It is through the light of the sun that he sits, goes out, works and returns.

Janaka: Just so, Yajnavalkya.

Beginning thus, the conversation continues about other sources of light and finally concludes as follows:

अस्तमित आदित्ये याज्ञवल्क्य चन्द्रमस्यस्तमिते शान्तेऽग्नौ शान्तायां वाचि
किञ्ज्योतिरेवायं पुरुष इत्यात्मैवास्य ज्योतिर्भवतीत्यात्मनैवायं ज्योतिषास्ते
पल्ययते कर्म कुरुते विपल्येतीति ॥

कतम आत्मेति योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु ह्यद्यन्तर्ज्योतिः पुरुषः स समानः
सन्नुभौ लोकावनुसञ्चरति ध्यायतीव लेलायतीव स हि स्वप्नो भूत्वेमं
लोकमतिक्रामति मृत्यो रूपाणि ॥

³⁵ Chandogya Upanishad 3.13.7

³⁶ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.2-7

Janaka: When the sun and the moon have both set, the fire has gone out, and speech has stopped, Yajnavalkya, what serves as the light for a man?

Yajnavalkya: The Self serves as his light. It is through the light of the Self that he sits, goes out, works and returns.

Janaka: Indeed it is so, Yajnavalkya.

This *mantra* portion from Brihadaranyaka is the *pramāṇa* for the following anecdote from Sankaracharya's life. During one of Sankaracharya's storm-like sojourns across Bharata varsha (*Digvijaya Yatra*), an elderly Vedic scholar approached him with reverence and prayed ardently for the knowledge of the Self.

Vedic scholar: Lord, I am quite old now and I yearn to see the Supreme Light before this body falls. Although I have learnt the *śāstras*, I have no direct Experience. Kindly instruct me on the Knowledge of the Self.

Acharya: One can know the Self by contemplating on any one of these—Effulgence, Beingness or Bliss. You mentioned about 'light'. You see this world; you see all that is before you; how do you see them?

V: With the light of the sun.

A: Then, at night?

V: By moonlight or by the light of a lamp.

- A:** How do you see the moonlight or the lamp?
- V:** With my eyes.
- A:** So, when you are asleep, and your eyes are closed, and there is no other light, how are your dreams lit up so brightly?
- V:** With the light of my mind—*dhiḥ*, the intellect.
- A:** Who sees that intellect and its absence in deep sleep?
- V:** I, myself.
- A:** What is this 'I'?
- V:** I am... I am... I am only!
- A:** Who knows this 'I'?
- V:** I know the 'I' by myself.
- A:** 'I' by itself is Luminosity, Intelligence and Beingness. In deep sleep, the 'I' remains alone as itself and there, the 'I' knows itself as the whole by its own effulgence. Beingness itself is effulgence. That eternal Light you are—*bhavanparamakam jyotiḥ*; the Light which you are searching for, the Light by which the whole universe is known is you! You are the fulcrum! You are the centre—***Tattvamasī!***
- V:** ***tadasmi prabho!*** That I am, O Lord.

This expression of '*tadasmi prabho!*' is referred to as *pratyabhijñā*. It is the explosion of realisation. The moment Guru gives the teaching, the recognition happens—'I am that Eternal Light! That Truth which illumines all, the Reality

which gives light to everything, that supreme effulgence am I!’

The dialogue that ensued between them was later condensed by Bhagavatpada as the *Ekaśloki* below:

किं ज्योतिस्तवभानुमानहनि मे रात्रौ प्रदीपादिकं
स्यादेवं रविदीपदर्शन विधौ किं ज्योतिराख्याहि मे ।
चक्षुस्तस्य निमीलनादिसमये किं धीर्धियो दर्शने
किं तत्राहमतो भवन्परमकं ज्योतिस्तदस्मि प्रभो ॥

This inner light is explored further in the fourth verse of Dakshinamurti Stotra.



VERSE FOUR

नानाच्छिद्रघटोदरस्थितमहादीपप्रभा भास्वरं
 ज्ञानं यस्य तु चक्षुरादिकरणद्वारा बहिः स्पन्दते ।
 जानामीति तमेव भान्तमनुभात्येतत्समस्तं जगत्
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥४॥

*nānācchidraghaṭodarasthitamahādīpaprabhā bhāsvaram
 jñānam yasya tu cakṣurādikaraṇadvārā bahiḥ spandate ।
 jānāmīti tameva bhāntamanubhātyetatsamastam jagat
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥4॥*

Just as the light of a brilliant lamp hidden inside a pot with many holes shines out through the holes, His consciousness gleams through the sense-organs such as the eye. This whole universe shines, illumined by Him, who shines as the knowingness 'I Know'. To Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

This body is a pitcher, a mere pot with many holes
 In its womb is an unworldly light blazing as pure *Jñāna*
 The rays of this knowing principle peep through the senses
 The comely inner light is self-effulgent as 'I AM'
 Illumined by that, the entire seen becomes known
 The knower behind the entire known is He, the unknowable!
 He, the light of all lights, Sri Dakshinamurti is our only refuge.

The Lamp Inside the Pot

nānā-cchidra-ghaṭa means a pot with many holes. Here Sankara Bhagavatpada is comparing our body to a pot with holes! *udara* means stomach. **ghaṭodarasthita**—placed in the *udara* of the *ghaṭa* or placed within the pot. **mahādīpaprabhā bhāsvaram** means the radiant light of a brilliant lamp. Eyes are needed to see ordinary lamps; but as this lamp is self-effulgent, it is called as **mahādīpa**. As the rays of light from the lamp beam out through the holes of the pot, **jñānaṃ yasya tu cakṣurādikaraṇadvārā bahiḥ spandate**, in the same way, the *Jñāna śakti* within peeps out through the various holes in our body—the eyes, ears, nose and the other senses. **jānāmi iti**—from within comes the sense ‘I know all these things.’ In the womb of this ‘I know’ feeling, is hidden a supreme light which is of the nature of pure consciousness. **tameva bhāntaṃ anubhāti etat samastaṃ jagat**—the whole universe gets illumined by the consciousness that shines forth as ‘I’, ‘I’. **tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye**—to that Supreme Teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

In this verse of Dakshinamurti Stotra, the example is that of a pot with many holes—‘*nānācchidram*’, whereas in a similar *śloka* in Prabodhasudhakara, Acharya gives an example of a pot with exactly five holes in it—‘*pañcacchidram*’, corresponding to our five senses. Acharya explains this analogy in more detail in that *śloka*.

गाढध्वान्तगृहान्ततः क्षितितले दीपं निधायोज्ज्वलं
 पञ्चच्छिद्रमधोमुखं हि कलशं तस्योपरि स्थापयेत् ।
 तद्बाह्ये परितोऽनुरन्ध्रममलां वीणां च कस्तूरिकां
 सद्रत्नं व्यजनं न्यसेच्च कलशच्छिद्राध्वनिर्गच्छताम् ॥
 तेजोऽंशेन पृथक्पदार्थनिवहज्ञानं हि यज्जायते
 तद्रन्ध्रैः कलशेन वा किमु मृदो भाण्डेन तैलेन वा ।
 किं सूत्रेण न चैतदस्ति रुचिरं प्रत्यक्षबाधादतो
 दीपज्योतिरिहैकमेव शरणं देहे तथात्मा स्थितः ॥

(Prabodhasudhakara 93-94)

A lamp is placed in a dark room, and it is covered with a pot with five holes. The light from the lamp comes out through the holes as five distinct beams of light. The following objects are kept in front of each of these beams—a gooseberry, a *kastūri* (musk), a gem, a fan, and a *veeṇa*. These are representative of the five senses and the five elements—*kastūri* (smell), gooseberry (taste), gem (light or eyes), fan (touch) and *veeṇa* (sound). The light from the lamp within shines through the five holes and falls precisely on each of these five objects kept outside and illumines them.

After explaining thus, Sankara Bhagavatpada says: *padārthajñānam hi yat jāyate*—when we see these objects we know them to be a *veeṇa*, a *kastūri* and so forth. How do we know so? Is it due to the darkness of the room, or is it due to the pot, or is it because of the *veeṇa* or the *kastūri*? *dīpajyoti ihaikameva śaraṇam*—the light of the lamp alone is the cause. The light from the lamp comes out and illumines

all the five objects. *dehe tathātmā sthitaḥ*—similarly, there exists Ātman in the body, and it is that Awareness that beams through the eyes and sees form, through the ears hears sound, through the nose it smells, through the tongue it tastes, and through the skin feels touch. Just as there is only one lamp within the pot, it is that one Reality that is present within us that comes out of the five senses.

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान् स्पर्शाश्च मैथुनान्
एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥

(Kathopanishad 2.1.3)

This same teaching is given by Yama to Nachiketas in Kathopanishad, “The reality due to which *rūpaṃ* (form), *rasaṃ* (taste), *gandhaṃ* (smell), *śabdān* (sounds), *sparsān* (touch), and *maithunān* (conjugal joy) are all experienced, is that One Reality, without which, none of these can happen. That due to which the world is seen—that Light—seek it within. That is this—*etad vai tat!*”

jñānaṃ yasya tu cakṣurādikaraṇadvārā bahiḥ spandate—*Jñāna* shines forth in pure form as well as in impure form. It shines in its pure form as the Awareness ‘I am’—*aham asmi*. ‘*aham, aham, aham*’, is the pure *swarūpa* of Dakshinamurti. From this, arises a *śakti*. The first manifestation of it, which is extremely pure, is known as *Chit-Śakti*. When the same *śakti* scatters out through the senses, grasps things, and comes back, it is called mind. If this *śakti* merely comes out through the senses, it is still

pure—it is not yet the mind. It is only when the *śakti* comes out and gathers sensory experiences, it becomes the mind.

Ignoring the divine source within, we get easily engulfed by *rūpa*, *rasa*, *gandha*, *śabda*, and *sparsā* which are outside. As our whole world constitutes these sensations alone, our attention never turns inwards towards the Self. Failing to see the Inner Light, we see that which is illumined by the Light. Ignoring the *dr̥k*, we choose to see only the *dr̥śyam* that is outside. Leaving aside this external knowledge, we must turn towards the light within which illumines all that is seen; we must turn towards the One who knows.

Analogy by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

Bhagavan Ramana has given a fitting analogy of a cinema projector. In a cinema projector, a beam of light passes through the film that rotates in a reel. Projected through the lens, it appears on the screen as the movie. Similarly, that light which originates from within—the *Chit-jyoti* (Light of Consciousness), passes through the film of *vāsanās* inside us, and gets projected outwards through the lens of the five senses and appears as the world outside. If there is no film in the cinema projector, what would we see in the screen? Only light. Similarly, if the *vāsanās* are annihilated through *Jñāna*, then, the effulgence of *Chit* will get projected through the five senses in its pure form. The Truth is that, only *chidākāśa* (space of consciousness) exists—nothing else. It is

the film of *vāsanās* that gives rise to all else that is seen. When *vāsanās* are absent, *chidākāśa* itself is *Chitjyoti*, *ghaṭodara* itself is *dīpa*. Bhagavan Ramana uses the words '*veļi oļi*' in Tamil; it means, space itself is effulgence. Once you behold the inner flame, that flame swallows time, space and causation. Then, all including the senses, body and mind, will be made of light alone. It is only when we dive deeper and deeper within, will we understand the profundity of this.

nānā-cchidra-ghaṭodara-sthita mahā-dīpa-prabhā bhāsvaram—it is the Inner light alone that is being dissipated through the holes of our senses; and what we perceive through the senses are only the objects that appear in that light—and while all this goes on, we continue to remain unaware of the light within! In order to see that light, we have to ignore the objects that are seen and follow the beam of light back to the lamp. '*jānāmi*'—'I know' is the beam of light that is to be traced back. The light of the Self comes out through this pinhole of self-knowing and spreads out into the world. This is the centre of all sensory and mental perceptions. Turning towards that Awareness, that is, by probing into the nature of the knower hidden in the 'I know', we will come to know 'That'.

When we come to know the knower behind all that is known, then both the known and the unknown will merge in the unknowable—Brahman. *tameva bhāntaṃ anubhāti*

*sarvam*³⁷—by His radiance, everything shines.

देवतिर्यङ्मनुष्याणां प्रकाशान्न पृथक्स्थितिः ॥

जीवः प्रकाशाभिन्नत्वात्सर्वात्मेत्यभिधीयते ।

Gods, animals and human beings do not have an existence separate from light. As the *jīva* is not different from light, he is said to be the universal Self.

एवं प्रकाशरूपत्वपरिज्ञाने दृढीकृते ॥

पुनरावृत्तिरहितं कैवल्यं पदमश्नुते । (Manasollasa 3.35-36)

Thus, he who is well-established in the knowledge that the Self is of the form of light (pure consciousness), will attain the state of *kaivalya* from which there is no return.

Some Profound Points to Ponder

As long as our attention (*dṛṣṭi*) remains scattered in the world, the *Chit-Śakti* will not shine in its pure form. When the snake is seen, the rope is not seen, and when the rope is seen the snake disappears. The misapprehension of seeing the rope as a snake is due to ignorance. If light falls on the snake or if we look at it closely, then the snake will disappear, and the rope alone will remain. Afterwards, even if we try to see the snake, we cannot. Similarly, when this world consisting of the five elements is seen, the *param* (Source) is not seen. And when we seek the source, then the world made of the five elements vanishes. When it is said

³⁷ Kathopanishad 15

that 'the world vanishes', it means that the *śuddha chit* alone will shine within the Heart. This is called *nirvikalpa samādhi*—objectless Awareness. In this state of *samādhi*, the world as such disappears—*drśya vilayam* takes place. In *nirvikalpa samādhi*, *brahma tattva* (the Reality) will be clearly known.

Bhagavatpada says in Vivekachudamani:

निर्विकल्पकसमाधिना स्फुटं ब्रह्मतत्त्वमवगम्यते ध्रुवम् ।

नान्यथा चलतया मनोगतेः प्रत्ययान्तरविमिश्रितं भवेत् ॥

(Vivekachudamani 366)

The term *pratyayāntara* means other thoughts. When other perceptions, feelings or thinking mix with the sense 'I am', the *śuddha chit* gets clouded. As smoke that clouds fire, these images veil the 'I am'. Yogasutra says this is '*vṛttisārūpyam*'—identification with the thoughts. In order to experience the *śuddha chit*, we must either quieten the mind or churn out the *chit* from all the other thoughts by holding on to the 'I' thought. The seeker should be extremely alert in not letting it mix with other thoughts.

प्रकृतिविकृतिभिन्नः शुद्धबोधस्वभावः सदसदिदमशेषं भासयन्निर्विशेषः ।

विलसति परमात्मा जाग्रदादिष्ववस्था स्वहमहमिति साक्षात्साक्षिरूपेण

बुद्धेः ॥

(Vivekachudamani 136)

Paramātmā shines forth as 'I' 'I' in the waking, dream and deep sleep states. He is effulgent there as the witness to the intellect and as different from the manifest and unmanifest nature. He illumines all that is

experienced in waking and dream states (*sat*) and also the nothingness of deep sleep (*asat*).

Acharya leaves no room for doubt in the above verse; he says ‘Paramātmā’ and not just ‘Ātmā’. *śuddha bodha svabhāvaḥ*—He is of the nature of **pure** Awareness, **pure** Consciousness. *sat asat idaṃ aśeṣaṃ bhāsayan nirviśeṣaḥ*—giving Light to all that is seen. *vilasati paramātmā*—that Paramātmā which you are seeking, constantly shines forth as the changeless seer of the three states of *jāgrat*, *svapna* and *sushupti* as ‘*ahaṃ ahaṃ iti sākṣāt sākṣi rūpeṇa buddheḥ*’. He shines forth as the *sākshi* (witness) of even the intellect, in the form of ‘I’, ‘I’, ‘I’!

Space Alone Remains

The space inside the pot is referred to as ‘*ghaṭākāśa*’—but in reality, is this space inside the pot? Can the pot really limit space? In truth, the pot can never limit space. The pot only gives an impression of imprisoning the space. Where does the pot itself stand? In space, isn’t it? Let us consider our body—if we probe deeper and deeper into the constituents of the body, we will finally come to the level of the atom; if we go further still, we shall find that space alone remains. The truth is that space, energy, existence, mind—each of these are indistinguishable from the other; in fact, they are all the very same thing!

Let us dive a bit deeper into this reasoning. Consider this—is it possible for anything other than space to exist in

space? This book that you are reading, does it sit here by displacing the space that was there? Can space be displaced? This question itself is absurd. Can we make space non-existent? Because we have placed something in space, the space seems to disappear from there, but in reality, it is impossible to displace space. If it is not possible to displace space, then it is equally not possible for anything to stand in it! That being the case, then how does this book or the body stand in space? We do not know! There is only one answer: that is, the space itself has manifested as the book or the body for the time being, that's all. This is what the Upanishad declares:

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः सम्भूतः । आकाशाद्वायुः । वायोरग्निः ।
अग्नेरापः । अद्भ्यः पृथिवी । पृथिव्या ओषधयः । ओषधीभ्योऽन्नम् ।
अन्नात्पुरुषः ।

(Taittiriyaopanishad 1.1)

Space itself has become air, fire, water, earth and then it appears as the living body as well. This is the only explanation that we can give for this question. But it is merely an intellectual explanation. In order to truly experience it, we have to find where space stands—only then can it be experienced. “Where is space situated?” Gargi puts this question to Yajnavalkya in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, and he replies, “If you ask this question, your head will explode!” That is, if we enquire further, we ourselves will be gone. So where does space stand? It stands in the experience of the one who knows space—the Knower.

The one who experiences the existence of space—in his experience, in his ‘I am-ness’—space appears.

Even though it is so direct and ever-attained, we wander about bemoaning ‘I can’t find it, I can’t find it...!’ You are yourself the Truth. You are the Reality! It is because you exist, that the world is seen. The whole universe is perceived in the consciousness of ‘I am’. ‘*Prajñānam Brahma*’ or ‘Consciousness is Brahman’ says *Śruti*. This is the first *mahāvākya* of the Upanishads. But what does ‘Consciousness’ really mean?

In the next *mahāvākya*, *Śruti* says: ‘*Aham Brahmāsmi*’. That Consciousness, that *prajñānam* that is within you, and that which shines as ‘*aham, aham, aham*’—that experience is Consciousness. Look within and find it. You shall experience Brahman as your very essence, as the true import of ‘I’. Once this is realised, the knower is relieved of the deluding grip of objective vision. He then beholds Brahman in the second person ‘You’ as well. Whomsoever he meets will bring alive the *mahāvākya Tattvamasi*—‘You are That!’ No more can he see any *ajñāni* in the other.

A doubt may naturally arise here: “But there are so many different kinds of beings?” Yes, there appear to be varied kinds of beings, but all these different *jīvas* are nothing but Brahman! ‘*Ayam Ātmā Brahma!*’ It is that One Parameswara alone who appears as the knowledgeable one, the ignorant one, as man, woman, elephant, cat and so on;

He is merely putting on various disguises. This is what Sri Ramana Maharshi refers to in the following verse of Upadesa Sara.

ईशजीवयोर्वेषधीभिदा । सत्स्वभावतो वस्तु केवलम् ॥

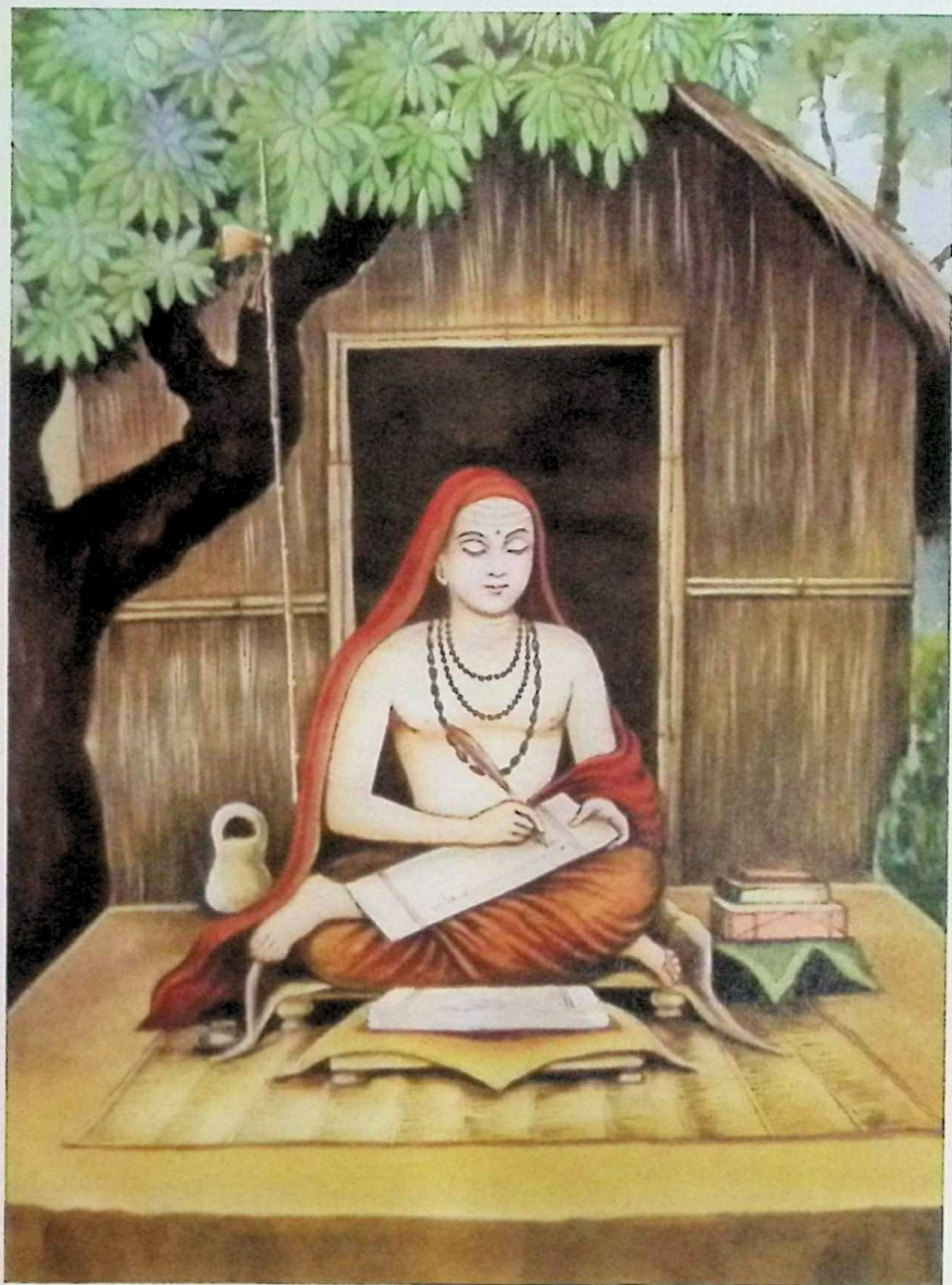
वेषहानतः स्वात्मदर्शनम् । ईशदर्शनं स्वात्मरूपतः ॥

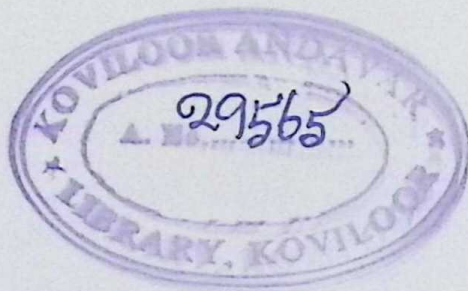
(Upadesa Sara 24-25)

Īśvara and *jīva* are different only in their form (*upādhi*). In their essential nature as *sat*, they are both the very same Reality.

The purpose of all that has been explained here is only to turn our attention within to that Light because of which all is seen. The purpose is not to explain creation. ‘Who is seeing this creation? Who is seeing the world?’—are the only questions that truly matter. Seek the seer and the seen will vanish this moment.







Chapter Five

FROM DELUSION TO ENLIGHTENMENT

In verses one to four, it has been well established on the basis of *Śruti-yukti* and *anubhava* that our *swarūpa* is *Satchitānanda*—it is *swayamprakāśa*. While doing *manana*, the seeker begins the denial from the body as ‘*neti, neti*; not this, not this’—here he encounters various planes, which are also called *kośas*. They are five in number—*Annamaya*, *Prāṇamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vijñānamaya*, and *Ānandamaya*. When all these five are negated, there is also a chance of ending one’s enquiry in *śūnya*—nothingness. What we are seeking is the real nature of ‘I’. But the ‘I’ does not reveal its real nature in any of these planes. It is revealed only when one crosses all these limitations by the grace of the Satguru.

In *Sutrashāstra*, Acharya speaks about various sects that carry misconceptions: “The materialists, who are known as *Chārvākas* say that body alone is the Self. Of course, this has always been the view of ignorant, worldly people. Some followers of the same cult hold that each of the organs is sentient and is the *Ātman*.

Others claim that the vital energy is the *Ātman*, and some others opine it is the mind. Some followers of *Sugata*—the Buddhist idealist, hold that it is the momentary consciousness—*kṣhanika vijñāna*. The followers of Buddha known as *Mādhyamikas* hold that it is

the void—*śūnya*. The *Digambaras* or *Ārhatas* believe that Ātman is different from the body and its organs, but is of the size of the body. The *Vaiśeshikas*, the *Naiyāyikas* and the followers of Sri. Prabhakara—the Acharya of Mīmāṃsa hold that Ātman is the doer and enjoyer too; He is omnipresent and inert by nature.

Others, i.e. the followers of Sri. Kumarila Bhatta (*Mīmāṃsakas*) say that Ātman is the doer and enjoyer and is both inert and conscious. The followers of Sāṅkhya and Yoga Philosophy claim that Ātman is only the enjoyer and not the doer and is of the nature of consciousness only. In addition, the followers of Patanjali accept the existence of an omnipotent *Īśvara* different from the *jīva*. These are the various partial views.

To rescue ourselves from all these half-baked truths we have to come to the '*Aupanishadas*'—followers of the Upanishads. They declare, "Ātman is *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-swarūpa*—eternal, pure, aware and ever-free by nature. Doership and enjoyership is superimposed on the Ātman only due to ignorance." (Brahma Sutra Bhashya 1-1-1-1). This is the subject of the next verse.

यदर्थं सर्वशास्त्राणां प्रवृत्तिरतिविस्तरा ।

आत्मज्ञानावतारार्थः सर्वशास्त्रसमुद्यमः ॥

(Brihadaranyaka Varttika 705)

Sureshwaracharya says, “All *śāstras* toil only to guide the seeker to Self-knowledge—*Ātma-jñāna*; that is their only purpose. Even when other paths are criticised, it is done only to pin down the seeker to their own path.”

The vehement criticism of other *śāstras* in this verse is only to save the seeker from exposure to unwanted influences which would be harmful for his *Vedānta vichāra*. Their only purpose is to guide the seeker to *Ātma-jñāna*. This is, as Appayya Dikshitar says, *nahi-nindā-naya*—“*virodho nātīva sphurati nahi nindā nayavidāṃ*.” The dictum referred to by *nahi-nindā-naya* is this—the criticism is offered not with the purpose of countering what is criticised, but with the intention of safeguarding the seeker and keeping him in the track of *Vedānta sampradāya*.

In this commentary, we are not dealing with any of the older sects or *pūrvapakshas*. We are looking at the verse only from the point of view of *Ātma-vichāra*. Helping a seeker in self-enquiry is the only purpose of this commentary.



VERSE FIVE

देहं प्राणमपीन्द्रियाण्यपि चलां बुद्धिं च शून्यं विदुः
 स्त्रीबालान्धजडोपमास्त्वहमिति भ्रान्ता भृशं वादिनः ।
 मायाशक्तिविलासकल्पितमहाव्यामोहसंहारिणे
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥५॥

*dehaṃ prāṇamapīndriyāṇyapi calāṃ buddhiṃ ca śūnyaṃ viduḥ
 strī-bālāndha-jaḍopamāstvahamiti bhrāntā bhr̥śaṃ vādinaḥ ।
 māyāśakti-vilāsa-kalpita-mahā-vyāmoha-saṃhāriṇe
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥5॥*

The spiritually immature misapprehend their body or *prāṇa* or their senses or their ever-changing intellect or mere void as the 'I'. Though deluded, they argue and try to establish their theory. They are like mere babies, or like unchaste women, or the blind who cherish leading the blind, or those who are utterly insensitive. He who removes all the terrible misconceptions created by the deluding play of *māyā*, to Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

Ever available is the glory of one's Self, yet many miss it
 Debates and disputations, they pursue with force
 Body, *prāṇa*, senses, the fickle intellect
 Or the void of primal error they take for the Self
 Blind wish to lead the blind, babies want to teach,
 Women unchaste to guide, the senile to heal the mind
 Ha! the deluding sport of unassailable *māyā*!
 O Dakshinamurti, the ever-awakened Master, *namaḥ*!
 Awaken me and break the mighty spell of *māyā*.

Various Misapprehensions

As a mother would lovingly warn her child about what is harmful, here, Acharya brings to our attention all that may mislead us away from the path lit up by Vedas. Many are those who identify themselves with ***dehaṃ prāṇam api indriyāṇi api calāṃ buddhiṃ ca śūnyam viduḥ***—many misapprehend the body, vital energy, senses, the ever-changing intellect and void as the Self.

So also, there are many who may misguide us because of their deluded ways. Sankaracharya gives some powerful similes—***strī-bāla-andha-jaḍa-upamāḥ***—to warn us of such dangerous influences. Some appear deceptively charismatic like unchaste women (*strī*), some childish (*bāla*) in their adamant nature, some blind (*andha*) to the Truth yet confidently lead others, and some are insensitive (*jaḍa*) to higher knowledge. Fixated on the lower planes such as body and mind, they declare—***'tu aham iti***. I am indeed this.' Hence, they are ***bhrāntā bhr̥ṣaṃ vādinaḥ***—deluded people who debate and argue incessantly.

After listing out all these warnings, Bhagavatpada prescribes for us a way out of these terrible confusions. He says that, ***māyā-śakti-vilāsa-kalpita***—all this is so because of the deluding play of *māyā-śakti*. And the only way is to submit ourselves to one who is capable of rescuing us from these delusions—***mahā-vyāmoha-saṃhāriṇe***. And who is that? He is none other than Dakshinamurti. To Him, the

unparalleled teacher, let's surrender unconditionally—
tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye namaḥ idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye.

Let us look at each of these warnings from Acharya in detail. ***dehaṃ prāṇam api indriyāṇi api calāṃ buddhiṃ ca śūnyaṃ viduḥ***—these identifications with body, vital energy, senses, intellect and void exist at various layers.

Body-Mind Identifications

Body

देहेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिप्राणाहङ्कारसंहतौ ॥

आत्मसङ्कलनादज्ञैरात्मत्वं प्रतिपाद्यते ।

वह्निधीः काष्ठलोहादौ वह्निसङ्कलनादिव ॥ (Manasollasa 3.25-26)

Just as the blend of wood and iron with fire is regarded as fire, so too, the assemblage of body, senses, mind, intellect, vital airs and ego with the Ātman is regarded as the Ātman by the ignorant.

The first insight of *Jñāna* is the knowledge 'I am not the body'. But, generally, identification with the body is very strong for all. Those who argue that body alone is Ātman are the grossest of thinkers. Although modern medical science accepts mind and energy, it considers them only as effects of matter. Hence, they too are '*dehātmavādis*'. Even consciousness, they take to be the effect of body. That is why the 'God particle' is searched for in the atom. They have sought God in the *aṇu* and the *mahat*—in the atom and in the infinite galaxies—and have not found it. They are

unaware that what is being sought is the seeker himself! Historically also there were many philosophers who argued that 'body alone is all'. This is what is referred to as *Chārvāka mata* or *Asurāṇām Upanishad*. It is known as the Upanishad of *asuras*, as the entire importance is given to looking after the body, keeping it healthy and beautiful. Even when it dies, it is decorated, seated upright, and finally sent off with a lot of fanfare. Even after death, so much is done for the body!

Once someone asked Sri Narayana Guru, a great sage of Kerala, "When this body dies, should we bury it or burn it; which is better?" He replied: "Place it in the oil till, and after crushing it well, use it as fertiliser for the banana plants." That person exclaimed "ayyo!" with visible pain in his face. Hearing this, the Guru retorted: "Oh, why? Will it hurt?"

अहस्तानि सहस्तानामपदानि चतुष्पदाम्।

फल्गूनि तत्र महतां जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम्॥

(Srimad Bhagavata 1.13.46)

This is said about those who mistake the body as *Ātman*. '*jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*'—Bhagavata says that one being survives by eating another. In order to provide this body with sustenance at the gross level, it has to be provided with food, and most take to meat-eating to appease this need. This identification with the body is the cause for all evils, for all cruelty and for all harmful actions. All the world wars have happened from this level alone. Compassion is impossible at the bodily level. Greed and self-aggrandisement are the only laws here.

देहमन्नमयं कोशमाविश्यात्मा प्रकाशते ।

स्थूलो बालः कृशः कृष्णो वर्णाश्रमविकल्पवान् ॥

(Manasollasa 3.27)

Ātman, having entered into the body which is *annamayakośa* (the sheath of food) appears as fat, child, lean, dark and so on, or associated with *varṇa* and *āśrama*.

Our society constantly reminds us of the body by saying, 'Oh, you have put on weight; you should go on a diet or do yoga', or 'You have lost so much weight! You should eat nutritious food.' Such remarks are quite common in our everyday life, and they are based on identification with the body—*annamayakośa*. 'He is fair. He is black. He is handsome'—all such thinking is also based on the body. So are all *varṇāśrama dharmas*. Although they are helpful for life in a society and for the upkeep of culture, they are also terrible bondages for a seeker.

Sankaracharya says in Brahma Sutra Bhashya, "Without identifying with the body as a *brahmin*, *kshatriya* and so on, one cannot do many of the rituals." So, even the Vedic rituals are based on *avidyā*. The feeling of superiority or inferiority based on one's identification as a *brahmin* or a *sūdra* is a hurdle. Even the identification with *sanyāsa āśrama* is a great obstacle for a seeker. Hence, *sastras* say that a real knower of Brahman moves about without any insignia—'*vidvān linga vivarjitaḥ*'. An enlightened being is an *avyaktalingaḥ avyaktāchārah*; he cannot be recognised

through his insignia or rituals. He hides perfectly like God. Hence, all these identifications with the body are said to be *vikalpas*.

Prāṇa or Vital energy

Next is *prāṇamayakośa*.

प्राणकोशेऽपि जीवामि क्षुधितोऽस्मि पिपासितः ।

संशितो निश्चितो मन्ये इति कोशे मनोमये ॥ (Manasollasa 3.28)

In the *prāṇamayakośa* (the sheath of senses and vital airs), Ātman feels, 'I am living', 'I am hungry', 'I am thirsty' and so on and in the *manomayakośa* (the sheath of mind), 'I am doubting', 'I am definite' and so on.

'I am breathing, I am alive. I am hungry. I am thirsty'—this is the realm of *prāṇa*. The very feeling of being alive comes from *prāṇa*. It is the energy level; it is the realm of vitality. Since this is a subtler plane than that of the gross body, by appeasing it, one will find a certain comfort in it for some time. When *prāṇa* is disciplined and brought into a rhythm, a kind of well-being happens. This is the first step towards mind control. *Yogasanas*, *prāṇayāma*, diet control and so on that deal with energetics belong to this plane. But here, one may get deluded into thinking that this itself is the highest attainment. There are many who have unwittingly taken *prāṇa* to be Ātman and got stuck at this level.

“*na prāṇena nāpānena martyo jīvati kaścana itareṇa tu jīvanti yasminnetāvupāśritau*³⁸—neither by *prāṇa* nor by *apāna* do the mortal live, but by something else in which both these have their being”, says Kathopanishad. He lives by another in whom these two are dependent.

Senses

When we continue to journey within, we will see the subtle form of the senses which are also made of *prāṇa*. The entire sensory plane is full of *prāṇa*. It is *prāṇa* that goes through the eyes, ears, etc.—“I hear, I see, I work, etc.”

Mind

If we continue further within, we will reach an even subtler plane of *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger) and so on—the plane of the mind. *Manomaya* is very well known. Made of thoughts, it is always fluctuating. All our doubts as well as our convictions also arise in the *manomayakośa*. Simple mental convictions happen only in the plane of the mind.

Psychology or ‘science of the mind’ is quite popular now. There are some who believe that psychology has the answer for all our questions and that it can even give us fulfilment. If we get mesmerised by this, we will explain away even genuine spiritual experiences as some sort of phobia or mania. There is a definite limitation for the

³⁸ Kathopanishad 2.2.5

delusion in the plane of the body, but at the level of the psyche, one may wander about in innumerable planes for innumerable lives. Only a compassionate *Brahmanishṭha* can rescue a seeker from this realm.

Two Functions of the Mind

Mind has only two functions—one is to think and the other to sleep. Either it will think, or if it stops thinking, it will fall asleep. Sleep and thinking are one and the same. Consider this—if we put some coal in water and mix it well, the water will turn black. But once the stirring is stopped, the coal will naturally settle at the bottom in some time. Similarly, when all the thoughts settle down and become a veil (*āvaraṇa*) which acts as a covering, then that is sleep. When stirred, they rise up, and that is thinking (*vikshepa*), waking or dream states.

In both cases, ignorance continues to remain. Not knowing is '*padārtha agrahaṇam*', and misapprehension is '*anyathā grahaṇam*'. When we do not know anything (*agrahaṇam*), we call it sleep, and when we know 'other' objects (*anyathā grahaṇam*), we call it as *jāgrat* or waking state. When there is neither '*agrahaṇam*' nor '*anyathā grahaṇam*'—there is neither sleep nor thought—and when '*śuddha chit*' alone is present, that is our *Swarūpa*. When there are neither thoughts nor sleep and the mind abides in *Swarūpa*, that is the state of *Yoga*.

As long as the mind remains, it will either think or go to sleep—this is the nature of the mind. Both states are mere identifications with the mind—or even more subtly, they are identifications with the *buddhi*.

Mind-Intellect Identifications

Vijñāna

विज्ञानमयकोशस्थो विजानामीति तिष्ठति। (Manasollasa 3.29)

Dwelling in the *vijñānamayakośa* (the sheath of intellect), Ātman says ‘I know’.

The feeling of ‘I know’ or ‘I do not know’ comes in the *vijñānamayakośa*. It is also always changing—‘*chalabuddhi*’. Hence Buddhists call this plane *kshanika vijñāna*. It changes moment to moment. ‘You cannot touch the same river twice’, is a famous saying of the *kshanika vijñānavādis*. It operates like this: “Now I know, now I don’t know, now I have understood and so on.” This intellect too is not the absolute; it survives by depending on Consciousness. *Vijñāna* (knowledge) too is not complete. Buddhists known as *kshanika vijñānavādis* and *śūnyavādis* got stuck here.

Śūnya

After denying everything including the body, *prāṇa*, senses, mind and intellect, next comes *śūnya*. Even after transcending these subtle planes, many get stuck in *śūnya*. During meditation, many remain blocked in ‘*śūnya pratyaya*’—a feeling of nothingness—for a period.

They may say: “Well then, when we completely deny everything, all that remains is a nothingness—*śūnya*! Nothing is there! We cannot see anything; there seems to be a void! Everything is just *śūnya*!” Some Buddhists got stuck here and propagated the philosophy of *śūnyavāda*. If one propounds this as a philosophy, then the whole spiritual quest becomes meaningless.

अनित्यदुःखशून्यत्वं पदार्थानां ब्रुवन्स्फुटम्।
बुद्धोऽपि रागाद्युच्छित्तौ यतते नाऽऽत्मनिहुतौ ॥

(Brihadaranyaka Varttika 710)

Sri. Sureshwaracharya states that, by declaring the impermanence of external objects and the absence of misery, even Buddha is using this method of *śūnyavāda* only to put an end to attachment towards worldly objects. Buddha is not speaking about *śūnya* to deny the existence of the Truth or Ātman.

dehaṃ prāṇamapīndriyāṇyapi calāṃ buddhiṃ ca śūnyam viduḥ—so, identifying with any one of these, one may mistakenly feel, *aham iti* (I am this)!

यं भावं दर्शयेद्यस्य तं भावं स तु पश्यति। (Mandukya Karika 2.29)

Whatever plane is revealed to a person by the Ātman, he beholds that plane.

If one gets blocked in one of the planes of the mind and takes that to be the absolute, isn't that what one would teach others as well? 'This is the truth, that is the reality, and

so on’—such persons are **bhrāntāḥ**, deluded. ‘*na tu pāragāḥ*’—they have not crossed to the other side. They make claims while still under the plane of limitations.

एवं कंचुकितः कोशैः कंचुकैरिव पञ्चभिः ॥

परिच्छिन्न इवाभाति व्याप्तोऽपि परमेश्वरः ।

Thus, the Supreme Lord, though omnipresent, being covered by the five sheaths which are like armours, appears to be limited by them.

यथा सलिलमाविश्य बहुधा भाति भास्करः ॥

तथा शरीराण्याविश्य बहुधा स्फुरतीश्वरः । (Manasollasa 3.30-31)

Just as the sun reflected by many pots of water shines as many suns, so also *Īśvara* enters various bodies and appears as many.

In fact, all these *kośas* are nothing but manifold manifestations of the Self. Ultimately, *Ātman* alone exists is the conclusion. In *Ātma-vichāra*, every single seeker comes in contact with all the above realms and has to transcend them. Without getting entrapped in any of these planes, when knowingness crosses from the plane of the body, mind and such, to that of *swarūpa*, then and only then will it attain wholeness. Only such a person is an enlightened soul—*jīvanmukta*. Until then, coming and going is inevitable.

Cautions from the Master

In this verse, Bhagavatpada continues to warn spiritual seekers about the possible pitfalls on this path by giving

some powerful similes—***strī-bāla-andha-jaḍa***. The simile of *strī* or woman is used to signify those sects who do not believe in the authenticity and divinity of Vedas. Bhagavatpada says that those who are not faithful to the revealed scriptures are like unchaste women, and using their charisma they lead the seeker astray—away from the sacred Vedic path. This simile is given to warn the seeker to be careful about the deceptively charismatic non-vedic religions. One should have ‘*śruti-pātivratya*’—devotion to *Śruti* like a chaste woman to her husband.

Ramana Maharshi has used a similar simile in Aksharamanamalai, “*kūrvāt kaṇṇiyar koḍumayiṛ paḍādaruḷ kūrndenaich chērndaruḷ aruṇāchalā*. O Arunachala! Without letting me fall into the torturous net of those women, who have eyes that are sharp as a sword, bestow Thy grace on me, and be in union with me.”³⁹ Once caught in such a net, one will lose all faith in Vedas, Master and spiritual life. This, Bhagavan calls ‘*kodumai*’—the most terrible thing that can befall a seeker.

So, even though both Bhagavan Ramana and Bhagavatpada have referred to the term ‘*strī*’, what is meant is not ‘woman’ as such, but those who—like unchaste women—lead the aspirant astray into the wrong knowledge of ***dehaṃ prāṇamapīndriyāṇyapi***.

³⁹ Arunachala Aksharamanamalai 20

bāla refers to those who are spiritually immature and are adamant like children. Many are the fanatics who childishly hold on to views that have no Vedic sanction.

andha refers to those who have not realised the Truth themselves, yet lead others confidently. ‘Blind leading the blind’ is a well-known Vedic simile. Modern scientists lead the entire world with so much confidence, but are really unaware, insensitive and heedless to the dire consequences that are in store. They are like *andhas*—the blind who enthusiastically lead others who are also blind, but are completely unaware of where they are heading!

jāḍa refers to those who are spiritually insensitive and who wallow in worldly pleasures. They are least sensitive to higher things. They suck our energy and make us too stay in the bodily plane. They are very dangerous for a seeker and are numerous too. All our entertainment media is full of them; they toil incessantly to make us inert, insensitive, sensuous, pleasure-addicted and cynical. They slowly poison us with their hypnosis and pull us back to *annamayakośa*.

Nowadays, there are many fanatic ‘religious’ leaders who have a great following all over the world. Blinded by their own deliberate and evident ignorance of Advaita, and without any *śruti-prāmāṇya*, these sects spread hatred and misinformation. They proclaim that they are the most ‘bona fide’ Masters. They have the seducing power of women—*strī*, and they are adamant like spoilt children—*bāla*. They

are spiritually blind people—*andha*, who have not seen the light. And above all, they are insensitive or *jada* too, as any amount of spiritual fragrance will not influence them as they are heedless to the Truth.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।

जङ्घन्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

(Mundakopanishad 1.2.8)

Gloating over their pettiness, they consider themselves wise, brave and knowledgeable. They are perfect examples of the blind leading the blind.

Until one meets authentic knowers of the Vedic tradition, one should be extremely careful about all these side-tracks.

bhrāntā bhṛśaṃ vādinah—anyone who blocks us in the plane of the *upādhi* is *bhrānta*. Bhagavatpada reminds us that such dangerous people are all ***bhrānthas*** or deluded men. They constantly try to debate and convert others to their views—***bhṛśaṃ vādinah***. Only falsehood needs propaganda or *vāda*, and these are powerful propagandists.

These warnings are very relevant for our time, as our world is filled with immensely charismatic mobs with a sad combination of adamance, childishness, insensitivity, heedlessness and fanaticism. Due to his immense compassion, Bhagavatpada warns us against all these dangerous influences that could make us falter, and reminds us to pursue the sacred path of *Vedānta* lit up by

our scriptures, with utmost *śraddhā*. See what Gaudapada says about the attitude of an *Advaiti* who is peaceful.

स्वसिद्धान्तव्यवस्थासु द्वैतिनो निश्चिता दृढम् ।

परस्परं विरुध्यन्ते तैरयं न विरुध्यते ॥ (Gaudapada Karika 3.17)

Dualists who are fanatical about their philosophy fight with each other. But we see all as *Ātman*. Hence, we have no hatred towards anyone.

All these delusions and the audacity of the so-called '*vādis*' make us reflect—'why do these people behave so?' The only answer is '*māyāśakti-vilāsa*'. Any of these delusions can temporarily put the seeker's mind into a whirlpool of confusion. Such confusion is pain. Only a mighty Master can rescue the seeker from this delusion—***mahā-vyāmoha-saṃhāriṇe***. Such a one is Dakshinamurti Himself. Bhagavatpada reminds us to surrender with devotion to Sri Dakshinamurti, who alone can destroy all these delusions caused by *māyā*—***tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye***.

Some Anecdotes from Acharya's Life

Many sects who propagated conflicting views were prevalent during Sankaracharya's time. The following anecdotes are excerpts from ***Atmatirtham—Life and Teachings of Sri Sankaracharya***. They illustrate how Acharya faced some of these non-vedic sects and the deep impact it had on them.

Teaching the Chārvāka

One day, a *chārvāka* by name Barhaspatya, came before Acharya and said: “Acharya! Your religion of Advaita will cause a lot of harm to people. Renouncing all comforts of the world and taking up *sanyāsa* for the sake of ‘*moksha*’ is the height of foolishness. The only treasure that we have is this body. We must nourish it so that we can enjoy all physical comforts. ‘*ṛṇaṃ kṛtvā ghrtaṃ pibet*—even by borrowing money we must eat well and live happily’, is our philosophy. There is nothing called rebirth or heaven and hell. What is perceived alone is the truth.”

Acharya replied with a smile: “Your words are pleasing (*chāru*). That is why you are called ‘*chārvāka*—man of sweet words’. The materialistic philosophy that you expound is not something new to be realised. You are only expressing the sensory knowledge which the majority of ignorant people are holding on to. Is a philosophy needed for this? Have you considered the limitations of your philosophy? Is it possible for you to keep the body comfortable always? Birth, growth, change, disease, old age, death—can any of these be prevented? Any of these can shake you out of your vacant dreams. The indulgences of the body are not permanent and may lead to disease and suffering! You can wax eloquent about the body when it is healthy; if you fall terminally ill tomorrow, what happens to your philosophy then?

Ultimate fulfilment is not possible for one who thinks 'I am the body'. There is certainly an abode of peace beyond this body. In a man of discrimination, dispassion is bound to follow. Then he will intuitively feel something which is not of this world, and is beyond the limitations of the body. This mysterious instinct is hidden in the heart of every man. It is indeed there in your heart as well. Do not ignore it. The experience of 'I' is there very clearly in you. Have you ever investigated its nature? Even when the hands or legs or some other organs are removed, the consciousness 'I' is felt undiminished. What is it that throbs as 'I', 'I'? Search within attentively.

This awareness of 'I' is something distinct from the body. You said sensory perception alone is the Truth. Is the consciousness of 'I' felt by the senses? No. It is the ever-experienced awareness of the 'I' that illumines all the senses. It can never be seen by the eyes, but it is the 'I' that perceives everything through the eyes! Even in darkness, the 'I' is experienced by the light of its own existence. It is by that light that the world is known. The 'I' is not inert like the body; the 'I' is Light. It is unadulterated Bliss. Knowledge of the Self alone can give boundless joy. *Śruti* says: '*sarvān kāmān samaśnute*—if the Self is known then all desires get fulfilled'. Then the goal of life is attained.

The journey of one who regards the body as the Self is a sad one, from the womb to the tomb. Only when one knows that the Blissful Self exists beyond the body, and that

it is possible to realise it, can life become meaningful. The Vedas are the only authority for things that are beyond the phenomenal world. They are infallible as they are divine revelations. Sensory perception is not reliable and is bound to delude. Without taking refuge in the Vedas, man will never attain the summum bonum of life. So be humble and take refuge in *Śrutimātā* who is more compassionate than a thousand mothers put together.”

Acharya's words and mighty presence had a massive impact on the *chārvāka*. He reflected deeply on Acharya's words and soon became a staunch devotee.

Guidance to a Nihilist

One day, a nihilist who had accepted the name Niralamba visited Acharya Sankara during his travels. Making fun of Acharya's views he said, “On the way here, I saw the son of a barren woman. After a bath in the waters of a mirage, he decked himself with a garland of flowers that had bloomed in the sky and came with a bow made of the horns of a hare. I thought him to be a god and prostrated before him. He said that he was the God of your religion.” Niralamba laughed aloud at his own joke. The serene and majestic Acharya, ever abiding in the Self, remained unruffled like a still waveless ocean. The absolute tranquillity of Acharya soon overpowered the visitor. After some time, he said, “My name is Niralamba. My father Krupta is the head of our sect now.”

A: Oho? You wish to say that the void (*śūnyata*) is fundamental to everything, is it not? Well, what do you mean by nothingness? Who knows it?

N: The knower himself knows the void.

A: Then who is that knower?

N: Nothingness knows itself.

A: In that case, how does 'knowledge' become its characteristic trait? Knowledge is not nothingness. It is the mark of Consciousness. Non-dual Knowledge itself is Ātman. "Everything gets illumined by its Light. *tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṃ tasya bhāsā sarvamideva vibhāti*", so declare the Vedas. You must never use words such as void or nothingness. They will create distortions in the human mind. It will arouse feelings of meaninglessness. Truth is perfect, Truth is Bliss. Taittiriya Upanishad says: "Everything arises out of Bliss, remains in Bliss and merges in Bliss."

N: *Śrutis* also state—"khaṃ brahma. Space is Brahman." Space is where all elements merge. Space is indeed void.

A: Space can never be nothingness as the other four elements that arise and merge in it, remain in it in seed-form. The term space that occurs in Chandogya Upanishad does not refer to the element space.

अस्य लोकस्य का गतिरित्याकाश इति होवाच सर्वाणि ह वा इमानि
भूतान्याकाशादेव समुत्पद्यन्त आकाशं प्रत्यस्तं यन्त्याकाशो ह्येवैभ्यो
ज्यायानकाशः परायणम् ॥

(Chandogya 1-9-1)

'What is the essence of this world?' '*ākāśa*', he replied. 'For all these beings arise from *ākāśa* alone and are finally dissolved into *ākāśa*. *ākāśa* alone is greater than all these; therefore, *ākāśa* is the supreme support.'

ākāśa here stands for the Supreme Self. *Śruti* states very clearly that '*ākāśa* arises from the Self. '*sa etasmādātmanah ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ*' (Taittiriya Upanishad). See what Brahma Sutra says—'*ākāśastallīngāt*.' The phrase '*tallīngāt*' is used to show that *ākāśa* indicates Brahman. '*ākāśaḥ tallīngāt*—the word *ākāśa* (is Brahman) on account of the characteristic marks of That (Brahman)'. The vision of space is always an aid to meditation.

आकाशवन्निर्मलनिर्विकल्पनिःसीमनिस्पन्दननिर्विकारम् ।

अन्तर्बहिःशून्यमनन्यमद्वयं स्वयं परं ब्रह्म किमस्ति बोध्यम् ॥

(Vivekachudamani 394)

Immaculately pure like space, and immutable,
Limitless, motionless and changeless,
No distinction of within and without,
Non-different from the Self, non-dual, Supreme
Brahman,
Shining as one's own Self—what more is to be known?

After listening to Acharya's advice, Niralamba returned satisfied. Various other groups like supporters of the doctrines of *guṇas*, *sāṅkhyas*, and *paramāṇu-kāraṇa-vādis* entered into debates with Acharya, but soon took leave after getting rid of their delusions. All of them became devotees of the Master. *Vaināsikas* and *Śūnyavādis* came in groups

and argued vehemently. Acharya strongly and tirelessly countered their views. It appeared as if he was convinced that if these people, who were against the Vedas, were not vanquished, the consequences could be very damaging.

At the end of the discussion, Acharya said: Those who yearn for well-being, should completely ignore the religion of Sugata—"sarvathāpi anādaraṇīyoyam sugatasamayaḥ śreyaskāmaiḥ." (Brahma Sutra Bhashya). *Śāstras* are there to indicate the Self. No *śāstra* or Guru is required to tell you that 'you are nothing'. *Śruti* roars, '*Tattvamasi*'. One who has experienced the Truth 'I am the Self' (*Aham Brahmāsmi*) abides firmly and steadfastly in Peace. Is it possible to be established in nothingness? *Śruti* says, "He becomes established in His own glory." Always meditate 'I am Brahman', 'I am Pure Eternal Free Consciousness.' You are beyond death. You are the Self, not the body. This is the teaching that grants immortality. If you think you are *śūnya*, the mind will identify itself with it. **"Arise, awake, and seek the guidance of an illumined Master—*uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata, prāpyavarān nibodhata.*"** (Kathopanishad 1.3.14)



Chapter Six

SLEEP AND REALISATION

Our body, even though taken to be real in the waking state, disappears completely in *sushupti*—all bodily limitations go away in deep sleep. Existence or mere IS-ness alone remains there. That is Brahman. But this state is not recognised due to the lack of *Guru upadeśa*. This is what the Upanishad says:

कामा अनृतापिधानास्तद्यथापि हिरण्यनिधिं निहितमक्षेत्रज्ञा उपर्युपरि
सञ्चरन्तो न विन्देयुरेवमेवेमाः सर्वाः प्रजा अहरहर्गच्छन्त्य एतं ब्रह्मलोकं
न विन्दन्त्यनृतेन हि प्रत्यूढाः ॥ (Chandogya Upanishad 8.3.2)

Just as people, who do not know the spot where a treasure of gold has been hidden somewhere in the earth, walk over it again and again without finding it, so all these creatures here though they go into the world of Brahman day after day (in *sushupti*) yet do not find it, for they are carried away by untruth.

सर्वाः प्रजाः सति सम्पद्य न विदुः सति सम्पद्यामह इति ॥

(Chandogya Upanishad 6.9.2)

My dear, all these creatures, though they have merged into the Truth—the Pure Being, do not know that they have merged into the Truth or Pure Being.

स वा एष आत्मा हृदि तस्यैतदेव निरुक्तं हृद्यमिति तस्माद्धृदयमहरहर्वा
एवंवित्स्वर्गं लोकमेति ॥ (Chandogya Upanishad 8.3.3)

That Ātman is in the Heart. So that is called *Hṛdayam*.
When declared by an Enlightened Master, he realises
with ecstasy that every day he goes to the divine realm.

This is the subject of the next verse.



VERSE SIX

राहुग्रस्तदिवाकरेन्दुसदृशो मायासमाच्छादनात्
 सन्मात्रः करणोपसंहरणतो योऽभूत्सुषुप्तः पुमान् ।
 प्रागस्वाप्समिति प्रबोधसमये यः प्रत्यभिज्ञायते
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ ६ ॥

*rāhugrasta-divākarendu-sadrśo māyāsamācchādanāt
 sanmātraḥ karaṇopasaṃharaṇato yo'bhūtsusuptaḥ pumān ।
 prāg-asvāpsamiti prabodha-samaye yaḥ pratyabhijñāyate
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥6॥*

When all functions of the senses and the mind are withdrawn, one enters into the state of deep sleep. Like the sun and the moon eclipsed by *Rahu*, here, veiled by *māyā*, he remains as mere existence—*sanmātra*. When awakened, he recognises himself and recollects, 'hitherto I was asleep.' To Him, the divine teacher Sri Dakshinamurti, by whose Grace alone one awakens to one's real nature from the long slumber of ignorance, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

The senses slowly turn back to the womb, the mind
 She, the mind, slowly recedes to her inner sanctuary, the heart
 The deity of sleep spreads her soothing spell,
 Just as mystical Rahu eclipses the sun and the moon
 The veil of *māyā* hides the splendour of the Self
 One remains as simple existence—*sanmātra*
 And wakes up unaware of this dip in the waters of spirit
 Awakened by Thee alone one Realises this treasure
 O Lord Dakshinamurti! Obeisance at Thy feet.

The Eclipse

छादयति शशी सूर्यं शशिनं महती च भूछाया ॥

(Aryabhattiyam/Golapada 4.37)

“Shadow of the moon hides the sun, and the great shadow of the earth falls on the moon”, says the Indian astronomer Aryabhatta. Rahu, spoken about by sages in the *purāṇas*, is not a real planet but only a mystic force. In fact, they are two—Rahu and Ketu. One has only a head and the other only a body. They are the powers of veiling and projection respectively; one covers (*āvaraṇa*), while the other projects (*vikshepa*).

karaṇa upasaṃharaṇataḥ—withdrawing all functions of the mind and senses, ***yaḥ pumān suṣuptaḥ abhūt***—the person enters sleep, (then) ***rāhu-grasta divākarendu sadṛśaḥ***—similar to the sun and the moon eclipsed by Rahu, the mind and the intellect (intellect is the sun and mind the moon) are covered by ignorance—***māyā samācchādanāt***. What exists there in sleep? ***saṃmātraḥ***—existence alone. ***saṃmātraḥ karaṇa upasaṃharaṇataḥ yaḥ abhūt suṣuptaḥ pumān***—folding up all the functions of the senses and the mind, one remains there as mere existence. This describes the state of *sushupti* or deep sleep. And on waking up, he remarks ***prāg-asvāpsam***—‘all this while I was sleeping?’ ***iti prabodhasamaye yaḥ pratyabhijñāyate***—upon waking, one realises so. ***tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye***—to that Supreme teacher, Sri

Dakshinamurti, by whose Grace alone will one awaken to this Knowledge, is this prostration.

Sushupti

The amazing thing is, when mind arises the world arises along with it, and when mind subsides the world too disappears. When mind subsides in *sushupti*, what exists? In that state where one is sleeping happily, what takes place? If we talk about '*samādhī*' not all may know, but everyone knows about the experience of sleep as it is experienced by all. Psychiatrists often tranquillise their patients to sleep, as a cure for their problems. They know that something deeply healing happens in sleep, but they do not know exactly what happens. Often, sleep is advised as a cure for many of our bodily ailments as well. Naturopaths say that the body heals itself; but it is not the body but the inner being who heals in the bodiless state. Many problems get solved if one goes into it. This state proves that all the problems of the body end in the bodiless state.

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत्सुषुप्तम् ।

(Mandukya Upanishad 5)

Sushupti or deep sleep has great depth. **It is a state where one neither desires nor dreams.** If asked what *sushupti* is, we would casually say that it is only a state of rest. However, Upanishad declares, "*eṣa sarveśvara eṣa*

*sarvajña eṣo'ntaryāmyeṣa yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām.*⁴⁰ In that state, the one who is there is the *Īśvara* you are searching for—the *antaryāmi*. It is the source where all things arise and dissolve—*prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām.*”

सुखमस्वाप्समत्राहं न वै किञ्चिदवेदिषम् ।

इति सुप्ते सुखाज्ञाने परामृशति चोत्थितः ॥ (Panchadasi 11.59)

Upon waking up from deep sleep, a man remembers his happiness and ignorance, and declares, ‘I slept happily; I knew nothing then.’

After waking up we remark, “I knew nothing.” This feeling of ‘not knowing’ is sleep. It clouds our Self-experience as the mystic planet Rahu veils the sun during an eclipse—*rāhugrasta divākarendu sadṛśaḥ*. When Rahu covers the sun or the moon we call it an eclipse; but, does it really cover them? No. Does Rahu really exist? No.

In *sushupti*, there is no projection but there is veiling. Body, mind, intellect—none of these is seen there. We say that we knew nothing in *sushupti* and yet there is no sorrow there! ‘I did not know anything’ is the proclamation of the intellect which was not active in sleep. *Buddhi* has no entry to that state, and the sense of fulfilment that is felt comes directly from the Self itself. As our real nature is covered during sleep, we fail to recognise it there. In sleep, there is neither ‘*anyathā grahaṇam*’—grasping other objects, nor

⁴⁰ Mandukya Upanishad 6

‘*swarūpa grahaṇam*’—grasping of our real nature. ‘*agrahaṇam*’ or ‘not knowing’ alone remained there. This veil of *agrahaṇam* will go away only when we listen to, deeply contemplate, and uninterruptedly meditate—*śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*—on *Vedānta vākya*s from an authentic Acharya.

Losing Oneself to Gain the Supreme Self

Though we lose everything in deep sleep, we feel enriched by that nothingness. “*atra pitāpitā bhavati mātāmātā lokā alokā devā adevā vedā avedāḥ । atra steno'steno bhavati bhrūṇahābhrūṇahā...*”⁴¹ In that state, father, mother, world, gods, vedas, thief, sinner, outcaste, monk—nothing is there.” Despite losing everything, we were in happiness. That is why we say, ‘I slept happily.’ There, one transcends all miseries. That happiness is available to us in sleep without having to do or know anything.

We were unaware while sleeping; then on waking up, how do we declare that we were happy? Who registered that happiness? Of course, the intellect was not present there. Then where does that recollection come from? It descends directly from absorption in Brahman. It is indeed the taste of the transcendental. By ruminating over that celestial mist, one will certainly discover the pure spring of Self-experience.

⁴¹ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.22

All the misery of the waking state is due to knowledge that is devoid of Self-awareness. It is the thoughts that create various images in the pure Self. If we give up thoughts, it is possible for us to be in that state during waking itself. The 'I' thought or our individual sense is the root for all our thoughts. That is the *avidyābīja* or seed of ignorance. If that is erased, only the one Whole Brahman remains. But, due to our lack of knowledge about this, we wander about for millions of lives.

Ignorance is involvement with the known, all the while unaware of the Knower. There is something that lies beyond both knowing and not knowing—*arivum ariyāmaiym kadanda arivu tirumeni*. "O Lord, Thy body is made of pure intelligence which transcends both knowledge and ignorance" (Arunagirinatha). It lies beyond knowing and not knowing. It is pure Awareness—*Chit*.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa once had a conversation with Narendra, who later became Vivekananda:

Ramakrishna: If that bliss of Brahman is there as syrup in a bowl, and if you are a honey-bee, how will you taste it?

Narendra: I would sit on the edge of the bowl and sip it.

Ramakrishna: Why not just jump into it?

Narendra: But if I jump in, then I would lose myself!

Ramakrishna retorted: My dear boy, it is the syrup of immortality! Why should you fear to jump into it? By losing your limited individual sense there, you will own the infinite identity.

That I should be there to taste the bliss—this delusion is the obstacle to Realisation. Any bliss that one enjoys while continuing to be a person can never be Whole. The happiness that is found in *sushupti* every night is itself the proof for that. No other thing exists in the bliss that is there in *sushupti*—I am not there separately enjoying it; that is, in *sushupti*, I am not this individual; this ego ‘I’ is not present in *sushupti*. I do not remain as the *ahankāra* and taste the happiness. ‘I was happy’ is what we say, not ‘I tasted happiness.’ *Sukhaswarūpam* (contentment in our real nature) was there. We must keep in mind the fact that, in the waking state, no pleasure is similar to this experience. However, as our *buddhi* is covered by an *āvaraṇa* (veil), we fail to hold the cognition of this experience when we wake up.

From Sleep to Realisation

Once we wake up from that state, we lose touch with that treasure due to the power of *āvaraṇa* or veiling. At times, when we suddenly wake up from deep sleep, we get a brief glimpse of it and there is a deep yearning to go back to that state. This shows us what attraction it has for us!

What is that which attracts us there so much? In order to get some fulfilment in the waking state, we have to attain something, become something, or become somebody! Only then do we get some satisfaction, even though limited. But, in *sushupti*, there is no 'becoming'—only 'being' exists. In *sushupti*, all personalities are effaced; not even a trace of our personality remains there. Yet it is deeply fulfilling!

Although *sushupti* is just a state (*avasthā*), it does reveal the Truth—it gives us an intimation of the Truth. If we do *vichāra* on this, we will see that in that state we had lost everything that defines us. Yet we do not feel anything lacking there. We wish to go back to that state again and again—we are never tired of it. We have this strange fascination to lose ourselves there. That which continues to remain once the ego or the individual 'I' is erased, is the true 'I'.

In deep sleep, nothing can be added or taken away from us. The only thing that is lacking is that it is always a **past state**. It is never in the NOW. If deep sleep happens in the NOW, that is, if the mind merges in the Self along with wakefulness, it is Realisation! Then, the recognition of the real nature of 'I' is cloudless—*nirvikalpam*, like smokeless flame—*jyotiriva adhūmakāḥ*.

How can one experience this happiness now, in the present moment? In *sushupti* there is no need for *Ātma-jñāna*, because there is no suffering there. Suffering exists

only in the waking state and hence *Ātma-jñāna* is needed in *jāgrat*. So how is one to find that happiness in the waking state? Recollection of *sushupti* now, is only a memory. To enter that state now, in the present moment, is *Brahmasthaniti*.

Some Methods to Reflect on this State

As we get older, our recollection of *sushupti* becomes rare, as sleep gets very much corrupted by dreams. That is why the real depth of *sushupti* is so much more during childhood. The way children wake up from sleep has an ethereal beauty to it—it is like the glorious sunrise! Have you noticed that little children wake up from sleep as fresh as blossoming flowers, but elderly people wake up with dull looking faces? What is the reason for this? As we transit from deep sleep to the waking state, we pass through the corridors of dream and hence fail to hold the recollection of the bodiless, mindless immensity of the deep sleep state. All we are left with is the memory of awareness covered by the smoke of dreams or some dullness. That dullness is due to the cloud of *vāsanās* in us. But the deep contentment of deep sleep is neither the dream state nor this dullness. It is *Brahmasampatti*. It is the fulfilment of merging in Brahman.

Scriptures advise us to wake up long before sunrise—during the sacred moments of *Brahma-muhūrta*. These twilight hours carry something of the fragrance of Brahman in the very atmosphere. If you make it a practice to wake up

in this period, one day or the other you may wake up directly from deep sleep with a vague recollection of having come from that sacred realm. So, when you sit down to meditate, there is a chance that the state of *sushupti* could be felt slightly reflected in your awareness and you may gain an intimation of absorption in Brahman. There is a tiny interval between waking and sleep, and from that place one can see either side. Neither in deep sleep nor in the waking state can we see this interval. '*suptiprabodhayoḥ sandhāvātmano gatimātmadr̥k*'⁴²—there is a state where you are neither asleep nor in the grip of the waking state. In that state, there is a placidity. In that happiness, there is no separation (*vikalpa*) of 'I', 'you' and 'he'. That is what is described as '*prāṅ nirvikalpaṃ*' in the second verse. In *nirvikalpa*, there is no 'I', 'you', 'he', or the world—none of these *vikalpas* exist there. There, peace alone exists; there is relief, relaxation and coolness. Pure Awareness alone is present there as mere existence.

If we contemplate on the deep sleep state, Realisation is possible. By sleeping, of course one will not get Realisation, but by pondering over the experience of sleep, one will certainly get a glimpse of the bodiless, mindless state of Realisation. In Patanjali Yogasutra, there is a mention of this meditation on the experience of deep sleep.

⁴² Srimad Bhagavata 7.13.5

For Ramana Maharshi, his death experience was the cause for Realisation. But many have had near-death experiences, and many have come back from hospital ventilators to live for long, but they did not get Realisation! Why so? Ramana Maharshi did not get Realisation from the death experience itself, but from the way he looked at the experience. His approach to death is what led him to the portal of Realisation. He did *vichāra* during that experience and that lead to Realisation. Hence, Bhagavan never spoke about death experience as his teaching. He only taught *Ātma-vichāra*—the quest ‘Who am I?’ Sankaracharya says, ‘Without *vichāra*, *Jñāna* is impossible.’

नोत्पद्यते विना ज्ञानं विचारेणान्यसाधनैः ।

यथा पदार्थभानं हि प्रकाशेन विना क्वचित् ॥

(Aparokshanubhuti 11)

Knowledge is not brought about by any means other than *vichāra*, just as an object is not seen without the help of light.

The Art of Deep Contemplation

To observe ourselves, we should have a leisurely and orderly life, and to find the Truth that lies within us, we require a great deal of leisure. Whoever is prepared for it will plumb deep within and touch the sacred spring of peace. In order to observe ourselves and to note all the processes that go on within us, we need a great deal of time—solitude is necessary. Some worry that by being alone they may

become lazy. Let us be lazy for some time. No one can remain lazy for a long period of time. If we stay in solitude, we may be somewhat lazy for three to four months. If we observe nature, we can see that nothing happens in a short span of time. All natural processes take shape very slowly. It takes nine months for an embryo to grow into a baby!

Therefore, if we wish to do deep reflection, a little lazy period is necessary. The energy within us needs to get into order and find a new route within. Then, slowly, we need to look at the processes that are going on within us, and contemplate on our experience of existence in sleep. To ponder over the experience of deep sleep, one needs an extremely laser-sharp intellect with immense quietude in it. Then and only then, will it have the power to dive into the depths of one's beingness.

Our psyche is a subtle form of energy. It is these energy waves that are experienced as thoughts. The 'I' thought is the warp and woof of the whole energy sheet called mind. Only by laser-sharp focus on the movement of the I-thought can one make this psychic energy stream flow back to the source. The 'I' thought is the first peep from the deep sleep to the waking, and it is the pinhole through which one can peep into the beyond—beyond the closed doors of deep sleep.



Chapter Seven

INTIMATION OF THE INNER BEING

In the whole of Dakshinamurti Stotra, the most important part—revelation of the great *Jñāna rahasya* (secret knowledge)—is given in the seventh *śloka*. This verse is the heart of Dakshinamurti Hymn as it reveals the *Chinmudrā*. This is indeed the initiatory verse. Bhagavatpada speaks about *pratyabhijñā* in this *śloka*.

Truth is not a State

‘*avasthā*’ means state—a state is something which comes and goes. *Avasthā* is something that stays for some time and then changes. Even *nirvikalpa samādhi*, if it comes and goes, is only a state. Realisation is not a state. It is eternal; it is not an *avasthā*. Realisation is the very nature of one’s ‘I’. An unbroken Awareness of it is called *sahaja-nirvikalpa*.

This recognition is *pratyabhijñā*. Realisation is when one instantaneously recognises the ‘I’ as the boundless whole. That knowledge (*pratyabhijñā*), once it dawns, will remain with one forever; it will not be lost in any state, be it *jāgrat*, *svapna* or *sushupti*. The sun once arisen will never set. ‘*śakṛt vibhātoyaṃ brahmalokaḥ*’ says *Śruti*.⁴³ The

⁴³ Chandogya Upanishad 8.4.2

knowledge that is learnt from books and stored in the intellect is secondary. It may help in indicating the substratum (*adhiṣṭāna*) to us—it has then done its job and beyond that it has no other use.

Pratyabhijñā

Many a time, we search frantically for our spectacles, not realising that we are already wearing them! Most of those who wear glasses would have done this at least once. When someone points out the glasses to us, how long will we take to find them? Does it take any time? No! We recognise them instantaneously.

Once, a *śiṣya* asked his *Guru*, “How long will it take to know the Self?”

***Guru*:** One minute!

***Śiṣya*:** One minute? Isn't that too short?

***Guru*:** No, it is fifty-nine seconds too long!

The very moment the glasses are pointed out, they are found, aren't they? Do we have to keep on thinking 'the glasses are on my nose' again and again? Not at all! We have instant recognition and we even remark in astonishment, 'Ha! I was searching for them all this while and they were right here on my nose!' Such is the astonishment when one recognises one's own Self when it is pointed out by the Master. The one who points it out is called *deśika*. *diśati*—he points it out; *upadiśati*—he points it out here; *saṁīpe diśati*—he points it out as the most intimate; *swarūpe*

diśati—as one's own self; *swasminneva diśati*—in one's self; *swātmani diśati*—he points it out within oneself, in one's own *swarūpa*. It is recognised the very instant it is pointed out! The moment it is shown, there is instantaneous recognition—"**sohamasmi! I am That!**" This is referred to as *pratyabhijñā*. Sureshwaracharya has given utmost importance to this *jñāpti* or immediate recognition in the commentary for this *śloka*.

प्रत्यभिज्ञाबलादात्मा स्थायी निर्धार्यते । (Manasollasa 7.1)

The realisation of the Self takes place due to *pratyabhijñā*—instantaneous recognition.

It will not happen by objective thinking. All other *sādhana*s that we do are only preparatory steps through which one gains *chitta śuddhi*.

तन्मनःशोधनं कार्यं प्रयत्नेन मुमुक्षुणा ।

विशुद्धे सति चैतस्मिन्मुक्तिः करफलायते ॥

(Vivekachudamani 183)

An aspirant should cleanse the mind with all effort. When the mind is sufficiently purified, liberation is there as a fruit in your palm.

It is only in a pure mind that *pratyabhijñā* takes place—the very instant it is pointed out, one recognises it. The moment it is indicated, one's attention turns to the Reality. One becomes a *jīvanmukta*.

What is the nature of this Reality? This is described in the next *śloka*.

VERSE SEVEN

बाल्यादिष्वपि जाग्रदादिषु तथा सर्वास्ववस्थास्वपि
 व्यावृत्तास्वनुवर्तमानमहमित्यन्तः स्फुरन्तं सदा ।
 स्वात्मानं प्रकटीकरोति भजतां यो मुद्रयाभद्रया
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥७॥

*balyādiṣvapi jāgradādiṣu tathā sarvāsvavasthāsvapi
 vyāvṛttāsvanuvartamānam-aham-ityantaḥ sphurantaṁ sadā ।
 svātmānaṁ prakaṭīkaroti bhajatāṁ yo mudrayā bhadrayā
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrī dakṣiṇāmurtaye ॥7॥*

He, who, with the auspicious sign of Knowledge (*jñāna-mudrā*), reveals to His devotees the Self—which persists in all the changing stages (childhood, boyhood, youth and old age), in all states (waking, dreaming and deep sleep), and in all other conditions—and who constantly manifests Himself inwardly as ‘I’—to Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

Childhood, youth, and old age pass over
 Waking, dream and sleep, one after the other slide
 Multifarious states of mind and body set-in and go
 Amidst all these changes is the changeless-Self within
 Revealing constantly as ‘I’—the pure flash of awareness,
 ‘*Chinmudrā*’, the secret sign of the sacred
 Him, the inimitable Teacher, Dakshinamurti we worship!

The Eternal behind the Changing

balyādiṣu api—in all stages of body such as childhood, youth and old age, **jāgradādiṣu**—in all states of mind such as waking, dream and deep sleep, **tathā sarvāsu-avasthāsu-api**—in this way, in all states, **aḥaṃ iti antaḥ sphurantaṃ sadā**, that which constantly pulsates within the Heart as ‘I’, ‘I’, **vyāvṛttāsu anuvartamānaṃ**—remains constant while everything else undergoes change. **yaḥ bhadrayā mudrayā**—He who with His auspicious sign (of *Chin-mudrā*), **bhajatāṃ svātmānaṃ prakaṭīkaroti**—reveals the real nature of ‘I am’ to those seekers who worship, **tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī dakṣiṇāmurtaye**—to that glorious Guru Sri Dakshinamurti is this prostration.

balyādiṣvapi—the body undergoes many states such as *bālya* (infancy), *kaumāra* (childhood), *yauvana* (youth), and *vārddhakya* (old age). **vyāvṛttāsu anuvartamānaṃ**—while everything else undergoes change (*pariṇāma*), the experience of existence or awareness alone remains without any change as ‘I am’. The same ‘I’ that was present many years ago is there today as well—our experience is that there is no change at all to that ‘I’. So then, where do we see the change? It is seen in the sensory plane alone, whereas in the experiential plane, the same ‘I’ continues to be there.

An eighty-year-old grandfather shows one of his childhood photographs to his grandchildren. Looking at the

child in the photo, the grandchildren ask him, “Who is this baby boy?”

Grandfather: “That’s me, your grandfather!”

“But that is a baby!” retort the children.

“Yes, I was a baby then and I have become a grandfather now. But that is really me.”

Amazed, the children remark, “But everything has changed! You look completely different now.”

Grandfather: “The body alone has changed, but I am the same. That same me is there today as well.”

Yes, this vague experience of changelessness is inherent in all. Then what has changed? The body has changed. Not even a single cell that was present in the child’s body is there in the grandfather’s body. If we conduct a thorough clinical test, there will not be found even a tiny bit of the child’s body in the eighty-year-old body—it’s all gone! Then how do we say that it is the same person?

If this body is me, then the person who was present yesterday is not there today as the cells of the body are changing each moment. The body changes constantly, the mind changes, the intellect changes—everything is changing. We should reflect upon this well—this is real meditation. Even while we are sitting here now, much change is taking place, but we are not even aware! We are not conscious about those that change. We come to know about them only

if there is a reflecting medium; for example, a mirror will reflect to us the changes on the surface of the body. Without a reflecting medium, these changes are not visible to us at all. It is the same with death as well—we will not know when death happens. As you are not aware of a distant star that is disappearing from the galaxy now, so too your awareness will not register the disappearance of this body. That is why Lord Krishna says:

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धारस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥ (Bhagavad Gita 2.13)

In the way that childhood, youth and old age pass by, in the same way, death also happens. But the one who is wise does not get deluded by this.

The body that was there as a baby is not there in childhood; the body that was there in childhood is not there in youth; the body in youth is not the same one in old age. The mind changes, the intellect changes, even the ego changes. However, behind all these changes there exists a constant experience of 'I am' which does not change even a little bit—that *prajñā* (Awareness) remains changeless at all times. However, we remain unaware of it due to various superimpositions that cloud this *prajñā*.

Adhyāsa or Superimposition

In this *śloka*, Sureshwaracharya gives a description for superimposition—*adhyāsa*.

ह्रस्वो दीर्घो युवा बाल इति देहो हि दृश्यते ।

अस्ति जातः परिणतो वृद्धः क्षीणो जरन्मृतः ॥

इत्येवमुक्ताः षड्भावविकारा देहसंश्रयाः ।

वर्णाश्रमविभागश्च देहेष्वेव प्रतिष्ठितः ॥ (Manasollasa 5.3-4)

Short, tall, youth, child and so on are the characteristics of the body. So too are the six attributes like coming to existence, birth, growth, evolution, decay and death. The Vedic laws of *varṇa* and *āśrama* are also based on the body.

जातकर्मादिसंस्कारो देहस्यैव विधीयते ।

शतं जीवेति देहस्य प्रयुञ्जन्त्याशिषं शुभाम् ॥ (Manasollasa 5.5)

Superimposing several qualifications of the body on the Self, various rituals are performed. *Saṃskāras* such as *jātakarma* and *nāmakarma* are for the body. ‘May you live for a hundred years’—such blessings are also for the body alone.

All Vedic rituals are based on bodily identification; hence they must be transcended too. This imagination that one is the body is very deep-rooted—it will not go away so easily. If we are careless, it will catch hold of us like a virus. We may look at ourselves in the mirror and think, “Oh, I have lost so much weight” or someone may remark, “You have become so thin”, and we will keep identifying with this feeling for some time—*hrasvaḥ dīrghaḥ yuvā bāla iti deho hi dṛśyate*. When we look at the body or even think about it, such qualifications will come to mind.

‘Who is young?’, ‘Who is tall?’, ‘Who am I?’—if you investigate the ‘I’ thus, you will wake up from the spell of *māyā*. Probing very carefully into the experience of ‘I’, you will discover something which is eternal, ever-fresh. This is *Ātma-vichāra*. When thoughts crowd in, ask, ‘Who thinks this way?’ When a dark cloud of anger overcasts the inner space, ask ‘Who gets angry?’ When ambition arises within, question ‘Who wants to become something?’, ‘Who wishes to achieve something?’, ‘Who is the one who desires?’ Thus investigating, focus on the ‘I’, ‘I’; stay with the throb ‘I’, ‘I’. Then you will see your individual sense evaporating, and in its place, infinite Brahman alone will shine forth.

If we fail to enquire, the next moment we may get mixed up with any of the functions at the level of the body, *prāṇa*, brain, or mind. Many misapprehend the truth by identifying with various functions of the *upādhi*. **Freedom of the mind and body is bondage, while freedom from the body, senses, *prāṇa* and mind is the real Freedom.**

देहेन्द्रियप्राणमनोधियां यो जन्माप्ययक्षुद्धयतर्षकृच्छ्रैः ।

संसारधर्मैरविमुह्यमानः स्मृत्या हरेर्भागवतप्रधानः ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata, Navayogi Upakhyana)

Birth, death, hunger, thirst, fear, desire and ignorance are the characteristics of the body, senses, *prāṇa*, mind and the intellect. He is the supreme devotee, a Realised soul (*Bhāgavadottama*), whose recollection of Hari remains unaffected by these afflictions.

The Three States

jāgradādiṣu refers to *jāgrat*—waking, *svapna*—dream, and *sushupti*—deep sleep. In *jāgrat*, body is there, mind is there, I exist. In *svapna*, body is not there, mind is there, I exist. In *sushupti*, neither the body nor the mind is there, but I exist! This means that when the body-mind are there, I exist. In *sushupti*, when the body-mind are absent, then too I exist.

tathā sarvāsvavasthāsvapi—in this way, in all states the ‘I’ remains changeless. While all these states keep changing, the unchanging ever-existing Truth or the experience ‘I am’ continues to remain. The one who experiences *svapna* and *jāgrat* is the same one who experiences *sushupti* as well! Otherwise, upon waking up, it will not be possible for us to recollect the happiness experienced in *sushupti*. Since the one who experiences all the three states is the same one, there is behind them an ‘*anuvartamānānubhūti*’—a changeless experience. It is not a ‘*pariṇāmānubhava*’—an experience of change. It is that which is constant amidst the changeful, **vyāvṛttāsu anuvartamānaṃ**.

This is the way of understanding by the method of *anvaya-vyatireka*: “Even without all these states, I exist; during all these states too, I exist. Thus, ‘I am **That**’ which is separate from all the changing states.” I am that *avabodha*, pure awareness. While all the changes go on in the body-

mind-intellect during various states of waking-dream-deep sleep, behind all of it there is that changeless *Chit* or Awareness.

Chin-mudrā

What is this 'I'? *aham-ahamiti antaḥ sphurantaṁ sadā*—that which pulsates within the Heart always as 'I', 'I', *yaḥ bhadrayā mudrayā*—is the auspicious *mudrā* (symbol) of Dakshinamurti. *bhadra* means auspicious. When we say that Dakshinamurti is seated with the sign of *Chin-mudrā* in His hand, that *Chin-mudrā* is a symbol for the *mahāvākya TATTVAMASI*. The thumb represents 'TAT' or the *Paramātmā*, the forefinger symbolises 'TVAM' or the *jīva*, and their joining together represents 'ASI' or the intimation of their oneness.



Just as the heart, the thumb too has a mystical significance in Yoga. Practically, it does nothing on its own, and yet nothing can be done without it! Even the intuitive action of babies sucking their thumbs has a spiritual significance to it. In the Vedas too, the thumb represents 'Brahman' or '*Īśvara*'. "*aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ*,"⁴⁴ says

⁴⁴ अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽङ्गुष्ठं च समाश्रितः । ईशस्सर्वस्य जगतः प्रभुः प्रीणाति विश्वभुक् ॥

Mahanarayana Upanishad. With forefinger, we indicate the threefold egos 'I', 'you' and 'he', whereas the thumb represents Siva. *Chin-mudrā* represents the merging of the individual sense in the Supreme.

Chin-mudrā is *cit-kalaiva yasya mudrā*. *Chit-kalā* is a term found in Lalita Sahasranama. That *chit-kala* or the pure experience of 'I', 'I' is the *mudrā* of Dakshinamurti. The one who shines forth as *aham*, *aham*—in the heart is not ego but Dakshinamurti!

ॐ नमोऽहंपदार्थाय लोकानां सिद्धिहेतवे ।

सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय शिवाय परमात्मने ॥

(Brahma Sutra Bhashya, Srikanth Acharya)

Obeisance to that Siva, the Supreme Self, who is of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss and who reveals Himself as the implied meaning of the word 'I'—the centre of Realisation.

aham pada arthāya—the true import of the term 'I'. If we search for this 'I', then, ***svātmānaṃ prakaṭīkaroti bhajatām***—the 'I am' reveals itself as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. How does Ātman make Itself known? As the limitless *chit-swarūpa*, beyond the body, mind, intellect, ego, being the witness of all these, but unaffected by them, and simultaneously remaining as the *kevala anubhavaswarūpa* (of the nature of pure Experience). It is pure experience with no help needed from the senses to know the experience of 'I'.

The work of *Śāstras* and Guru is to turn our attention to that which is already in our experience. *bālya* (infancy), *kaumāra* (childhood), *yauvana* (youth), *vārddhaka* (old age), *jāgrat* (waking state), *svapna* (dream), *sushupti* (deep sleep), day, night—all these changes or fluctuations slide one after the other. That which knows all this—that Consciousness which ever remains without any fluctuation behind all these—is pointed out to us by the Guru. When Guru points to it, a mature seeker recognises it instantaneously—this is *pratyabhijñā*. This recognition is *samādhi*. This recognition of the Self takes place in an instant and it is more direct and immediate than anything that is perceived through senses—*pratyaksha*. The very moment it is pointed out, our attention falls on it. At the sacred moment when the *śishya* is ready to receive it and the Guru points to it, there is immediate recognition of the Self in the *śishya*.

An Anecdote from the life of Acharya Sankara

This wondrous incident from the life of Sankaracharya exemplifies the power of Grace in the words of a Guru. Prajnavishnu, one of Acharya's disciples, was deeply dispassionate and had been listening to Acharya's words for a long time. One day, Acharya was seated in solitude inside a hut; the fragrance of Acharya's profound stillness pervaded all around. Standing by the door, Prajnavishnu voiced softly, "Bhagavan!"

Acharya asked: **Who are you?**

P: It is me Lord, Prajnavishnu.

(Ignoring the answer, Acharya repeated the question.)

A: **Who Are You?**

P: It is me Lord, your servant.

A: (once again) Who is it?

P: I, myself.

A: **Who is this 'I'?**

At this question from Acharya, Prajnavishnu's attention fell on the *Chin-mudrā*—the 'I-I' pulsating within and merged into it. The pulsation of Consciousness (*chitsphūrṭi*) 'I-I' was experienced inwardly as the experience of the oneness of *jīva* and Brahman (*jīvabrahmaikyaruṇī vṛtti*). The Supreme Experience shone forth very clearly to Prajnavishnu.

The space within the pot (*ghatākāśa*) is the same as the total space (*mahākāśa*). It had never been limited by the pot. In the same manner, the 'I' that seems to be limited by the body is not the ego; it is the infinite 'I'—the absolute Truth.

The Illusory Body-consciousness

To see, eyes are required. Body is also known through sensations alone. It is truly astonishing—we say there is 'body consciousness', but there is no body consciousness; there is only body identification. In fact, it is impossible to have body consciousness!

Here's a baffling real-life incident. A man's leg was amputated from below the knee. One day, all of a sudden, he started crying saying that the toe on his amputated leg was hurting! This is a clinically-accepted phenomenon called phantom limb. If it were a toe on the real leg, then something could be done; but if a non-existing toe on a non-existing leg hurts, then what can be done? The only solution for this is to treat the brain; if some medicine is administered there, then the pain will go away.

There is no better proof that the entire body resides in a subtle form in the mind! Therefore, just because the body is gone, a person does not attain *mukti*—for he continues to believe at a subtle level that he has a body. Thus, the body is just a sensation; it is not in our consciousness! The fulfilment of bodilessness is experienced clearly in the state of *sushupti*. In deep sleep, the body is not there! This is our daily experience. Do we feel anything lacking there? We mistakenly believe that the body is needed for our fulfilment—but in truth, one feels whole in deep sleep without the body. It is apparent from this that even while the body is present, if by *tattva-jñāna* (Knowledge of the Truth) a person gains complete conviction that he is not the body, then he will attain the experiential bodiless state.

“In the Self, the body does not exist”, is the most profound revelation of the Upanishads. The body is an appearance in *prakṛti* (nature); it belongs to *prakṛti*, and not to us! For whatever purpose it has appeared in *prakṛti*, it will

accomplish that, and then all by itself, without even bothering to inform us, it simply leaves! When its *prārabdha* is over, it just slips off without even a goodbye.

If we pay attention to the awareness 'I', we will see that it exists without any change—as *kevalānubhavaswarūpa* (pure experience). It is not something which is associated with the body at all! As we notice this experience more and more—through the states of *jāgrat*, *svapna*, *sushupti*, and through the stages of infancy, childhood, youth and old age—while all these changes are there, the changeless experience of 'aham', 'aham', shines forth spotlessly pure. As we pay more and more attention to it, that will reveal itself as pure and whole.

प्रत्यभिज्ञायते वस्तु प्राग्वन्मोहे व्यपोहिते ।

देहाद्युपाधौ निर्धूते स्यादात्मैव महेश्वरः ॥ (Manasollasa 7.31)

As we remove the ignorance and limitations of the body-mind, we recognise the Real. Then the Self is itself *Īśvara-swarūpa*.

ईषत्प्रकाशोभूदीशो मायावनिक्तावृतः ।

सम्यगावरणापाये सहस्रांशुरिव स्फुरेत् ॥ (Manasollasa 7.18)

The supreme effulgence of Lord became hidden by the veil of *māyā*. When the veil of ignorance is lifted, it will shine as splendidous as the sun.

When Realisation dawns, the I-consciousness devoid of the limitation of ignorance, will shine forth as the infinite *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Being-Consciousness-Bliss) in the Heart.

The Threefold 'I'

In the *vārttika*, Sureshwaracharya has described the threefold nature of 'I'. Let us contemplate on these profound verses.

जाग्रत्स्वप्नोद्भवं सर्वमसत्यं जडमन्धवत् ।

ईश्वरश्चाहमित्येवं भासते सर्वजन्तुषु ॥ (Manasollasa 4.30)

Whatever is projected in the waking and dream are all unreal, lifeless and lightless, while *Īśvara* shines in all splendour as the 'I' in all beings.

The 'I' is effulgence while everything else is darkness. 'I' is *Īśvara*, while everything else is *māyā*.

निर्विकल्पश्च शुद्धश्च मलिनश्चेत्यहं त्रिधा ।

निर्विकल्पं परं ब्रह्म निर्धूताखिलकल्पनम् ॥

The 'I' is threefold—*nirvikalpa*, *śuddha* and *malina*. *Nirvikalpa* is the supreme Brahman who is free of all hallucinations.

The ego 'I' when enquired into, disappears, and Brahman shines forth as 'I', 'I'.

धूल्यन्धकारधूमाश्रनिर्मुक्तगगनोपमम् । (Manasollasa 4.31-32)

It is like the space which is free of dust, smoke and darkness.

Īśvaraścāhamityevaṃ bhāstate sarvajantuṣu—*Īśvara* shines within all beings as 'I'. *Aham* or 'I' is experienced in three different planes. *nirvikalpaśca śuddhaśca malinaścetyaḥam tridhā*. The unconditioned—*nirvikalpa*, the

pure throb of spiritual energy—*śuddha*, the expression of 'I' thought as the impure ego—*malina*, these are the three forms.

malina or the corrupted 'I' is what we are aware of. It is the *aham-vṛtti* or I-thought that limits us to an identity: "I am such and such a person. I am a woman. I am a man. I am learned. I am a fool. I know. I do not know. I am ignorant. How can I attain that?" Or, "I am a very great person. I am greater than anyone else." This is the *malina aham*. If we analyse carefully, we will find that all our problems and misery can be attributed to this impure 'I'. Our identification with this *malina aham* is the root cause of all problems. Not only is this limited to our personal 'I', but it gets reflected as the world outside, replete with all its dualities as well. The ego first sprouts as the I-thought, and then becomes the mind, and then the body, and then as the vast world seen outside.

The only solution to all our problems is to release ourselves from the clutches of this *malina aham*, which is powered by our own beliefs and misconceptions.

The Quest

The only way to transcend this I-thought is to dive within and enquire. We should search within with an introverted mind, 'What is this ego? Where does it arise from? What is it?' If we continue to hold on to it thus without leaving it, it will separate itself from the body,

mind and intellect and will surface as *śuddha-chit*. Sureshwaracharya declares that this is an in-between stage between the *malina aham* and the *nirvikalpa aham*. "*vivekasamaye śuddhaṁ dehādīnāṁ vyapohanāt yathā'ntarikṣaṁ saṁkṣiptaṁ nakṣatraiḥ kiñcidīkṣyate*."⁴⁵ During self-enquiry, when one's body, mind and so on are shovelled from consciousness, the 'I' shines forth in its pure form. This is like having a glimpse of the vast space in between the stars."

This is a profound insight for seekers. When *ākāśa* is covered up with stars or clouds, in between, here and there, some space is visible. Similarly, in between thoughts, here and there, is a space—a stillness. Everyone gets a glimpse of this stillness at times. Between one thought and the next, there is a thoughtless space. We fail to notice this thoughtless space as our attention remains locked on to thoughts. We are habituated to look at the thoughts and not the space between them.

For instance, look around you; what do you see? We generally observe only the people and objects present around us. But, in between all the people and objects, and all around, there is space. However, we miss to observe the space due to the long-formed habit of the mind to focus on

⁴⁵ विवेकसमये शुद्धं देहादीनां व्यपोहनात् यथाऽन्तरिक्षं संक्षिप्तं नक्षत्रैः किञ्चिदीक्ष्यते ॥

some name or form. Similarly, we fail to notice the thoughtless space between our thoughts.

It is impossible for anyone to think continuously. In fact, there is more thoughtless stillness than there are thoughts. If we closely pay attention to the gap between two thoughts, we will be astonished to find that we really do not think that much! It is because we focus so much on thoughts that we unwittingly take them to be incessant. But the fact is, if we get thoughts for even over fifty percent of the time, we will go insane. We cannot think that much! It is because we are unable to tolerate thinking beyond a certain limit that we yearn for sleep.

A Yogi who has completely quietened his mind, does not require much sleep as he never loses touch with the source—the Heart-centre—which is the greatest healing spot. When we are in the plane of thinking, we have moved away from who we really are. “*vṛtti sārūpyam*”, says Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras, “we get identified with some *vṛtti* (thought).” Although these thoughts seem to come continuously, there are sufficient thoughtless intervals in between. Even now, as you are reading, behind the thoughts there exists a substratum which the thoughts cannot touch—but we fail to notice this. Something is there which the thoughts cannot touch!

Probe into the 'I-thought'

अहमयं कुतो भवति चिन्वतः ।

अयि पतत्यहं निजविचारणम् ॥

'From where does this I-thought arise?'—for the one who enquires thus, the I-thought will vanish. This is Self-enquiry.

अहमि नाशभाज्यहमहंतया ।

स्फुरति ह्रस्वयं परमपूर्णसत् ॥

(Upadesa Sara 19-20)

When the I-thought or ego is erased, the Self which is the Supreme-Infinite-Existence shines forth on its own as 'I'-'I' in the heart.

As long as the snake remains inside the burrow, it cannot be caught; it is only when it sticks its head out that we can catch it. Similarly, the ego or this impure 'I' raises its head only when we think. When something affects us, the I-thought projects forcefully. When abused, our individuality raises its head and we feel, 'They said this about me, about me!'—there is a centred *aham pratīti*—'I will not let it go, I shall see about it' and so on. On such occasions when the I-sense arises strongly, we should try to catch hold of it. Or else, while sitting for meditation, if we feel restless that we are unable to meditate, we should investigate, 'Who is this 'I'? Who is restless? What is this pulsation or *spandana*?' If we pay attention to this *throb*, the whole mind will get condensed and become this 'I'-thought.

If we search for the ego to find out what it is, it will vanish in the inner stillness, and we will have a clear and pure experience of *Chit*. This 'I' is not the *ego*, nor has it hitherto revealed its Wholeness. It is an in-between state where we get a meditative throb or a *spandana*. That is what some call as Kundalini. It is the distilled expression of energy. Energy cleared of the dross of body, mind and ignorance reveals itself as divine experience. When it arises from the Heart we call it *Chit-Śakti* or *ahamsphūrti*. This *sphūrti* is what is found between the two—*ahaṅkāra* (*malina-aham*) and *ahambodha* (*nirvikalpa-aham*). This is pure 'I' 'I' throb—*śuddha ahamsphūrti*. When we investigate the 'I'-thought, it will slowly transfigure and surface as the *ahamsphūrti*; and then, that too will subside and the boundless *Nirvikalpa bodha* will reveal itself.

अविद्याख्यतिरोधानव्यपाये परमेश्वरः ।

दक्षिणामूर्तिरूपोसौ स्वयमेव प्रकाशते ॥ (Manasollasa 4.36)

When this veil of ignorance vanishes, the supreme Lord Paramesvara, reveals Himself as Dakshinamurti.

The Cloudless Sky of *Nirvikalpa*

Next is the perfect 'I'—'*nirvikalpa aham*'. *nirvikalpaṃ paraṃ brahma*—'*nirvikalpaṃ*' means pure Awareness devoid of any concepts; it is *śuddha swarūpa*. *nirdhūta akhila kalpanam*—all imaginations, concepts or superimpositions are wiped out.

Our experience of 'I am' is clouded by so many imaginations—for a child one becomes the father, for a wife the husband, in the office a manager, to the superior officer the subordinate and so on. We identify ourselves with all sorts of images as in a dream. If we notice carefully, we can see the flow of assumptions that goes on within us to become this and that—all kinds of disguises. Once these disguises or '*akhila kalpanam*'—assumptions are wiped out, then pure Existence alone shines forth as Brahman. Once a freedom fighter asked Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi: "Should we not be patriotic?" Bhagavan replied, "To be this or that is not your real nature. Be as you are."

dhūli andhakāra dhūma abhra nirmukta gaganopamam—a simile is given here of space (*gagana*) that is untainted by dust (*dhūli*), darkness (*andhakāra*), smoke (*dhūma*) and clouds (*abhra*). *Nirvikalpa* is like clear vast space. It is cloudless space. Our **real nature** is pure and radiant as the clear space. Here, 'I' shines forth as God. Just like the cloudless sky or a smokeless flame or a dustless mirror, consciousness shines forth as the *Nirvikalpa aham*.

अहमित्यैश्वरं भावं यदा जीवः प्रबुध्यते ॥

सर्वज्ञः सर्वकर्ता च तदा जीवो भविष्यति ।

माययाधिकसम्मूढो विद्ययेशः प्रकाशते ॥ (Manasollasa 4.34-35)

When the *jīva* awakens to the Godhood of the awareness felt as 'I', then he becomes omniscient and omnipotent. He is deluded due to *māyā*, and due to *Jñāna*, God shines forth.

ahamityaiśvaraṃ bhāvaṃ yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate—when we seek what this ‘I’ is, we come to know that *Īśvara* alone shines forth as ‘I’ ‘I’ in us. *sarvajñāḥ sarvakartā ca tadā jīvo bhaviṣyati*—then the *jīva* ceases to exist and the all-knowing omnipotent One alone remains. As the snake in the rope, the *jīva* merges in *Īśvara*. This Supreme State is our real nature. But, this nature is not apparent to the ignorant. We can cross this ocean of ignorance by paying attention to the ‘I’ within.

Just as we do *abhisheka* over *Sivalinga* with the holy water of Ganga, we should do *abhisheka* for the inner *Sivalinga*—the *Ātman* which shines forth as ‘*aham*’—with our incessant attention.

श्रद्धानदीविमलचित्तजलाभिषेकैर्नित्यं समाधिकुसुमैर्नपुनर्भवाय ।

(Nirguna Manasa Puja)

Bhagavatpada says that the real *abhisheka* is to be done with the holy water of *śraddhā nadi* and not *Ganga nadi*, and one should do *archana* for Bhagavan with *samādhi kusumaihi*—the flowers of *Samādhi*. ‘*chaitanya kusumapriyā*’ is one of the names of Divine Mother in Lalita Sahasranama. The *śuddha chaitanya sphūrti* that arises within in each moment are the flowers to be offered to God. If we remain in that pure awareness even for a moment—just as one rupee is a tiny part of a million rupees—this one moment too is a divine spark of the complete realisation. Thus, if we remain in stillness in this moment, the next

moment and the next..., if we continue to stay like that, we will abide in that fullness for eternity. ‘*pratibodha viditaṃ*’⁴⁶—moment by moment awareness.

In this way, if one continues to contemplate on the ‘I’ within, at an auspicious moment, our attention will cross fully into that timeless spaceless realm of *Brahman*. ‘*hṛda manīṣā*’—the mind will glide by itself into the Heart and our attention will enter Infinitude. All *sādhana*s that we do are only up to this point. Further, ‘That’ will do the work of pulling the mind to the source—‘*yemevaiṣa vṛṇute*.’⁴⁷ Pulled from within by the force of the Ātman, the mind subsides in the Source—and this finishes the final phase of the quest.

One can know the true tradition of *Vedānta* by the focus that it gives to *Chin-mudrā*. If the teacher does not reveal the secret of this ‘I’, the teaching is absurd—this is the test.

वैकुण्ठः केन दृष्टः श्रवणपथगतः स्वप्नवद् भाति चित्ते,
तद् वृत्तीनां निरोधः सहजशयनवत् तत्र को वा प्रमोदः ।
प्राक्प्रत्यग्भावमुक्तं तदिदमहमिति ब्रह्म पूर्णं नचान्यत्,
पूर्णानन्दोपदेशो दिशि विदिशि सदामङ्गलं देदिशीतु ॥

(Purnanandatirtha Stava

by Sw. Akhandananda Saraswati)

⁴⁶ Kenopanishad 2.4

⁴⁷ Kathopanishad 1.2.23

Vaikuntha, the divine abode is only heard and dreamt of
The trance of yoga, stillness of mind, comes and goes like
sleep

Dear! What special joy is there in the ephemeral?

Do you want the Real, the plenary, Brahman?

There was no time when it was not there with you

How do you miss the *pūrṇa* which shines timelessly as 'I'
'I' within?

Know this as Brahman—declared my Master

Let this teaching of the Guru confer auspiciousness in all
corners!

Once, Ramana Bhagavan initiated a lady devotee into this method of holding on to the 'I'. It may sound very unusual. He told her, "Just keep repeating, 'I', 'I' in the mind. Let it go on till your attention is locked in that inner throb. By this, the ego will vanish and then the true nature of the 'I' will be revealed. That is enough for you." The 'I', 'I', 'I', 'I' that goes on within constantly is a great *mantra*! It is impossible for us to chant any other *mantra* as much as we chant this one. However many crores that you may chant any other *mantra*, it will ultimately merge in this *mantra* of 'I', 'I'. This throb is present unconsciously behind all our thoughts and behind any other *mantra* that we may chant. This primordial throb is Lord's first name.

आत्मैवेदमग्र आसीत्पुरुषविधः सोऽनुवीक्ष्य
 नान्यदात्मनोऽपश्यत्सोऽहमस्मीत्यग्रे
 व्याहरत्ततोऽहन्नामाभवत्तस्मादप्येतर्ह्यामन्त्रितोऽहमयमित्येवाग्र
 उक्तवाथान्यन्नाम प्रब्रूते यदस्य भवति स
 यत्पूर्वोऽस्मात्सर्वस्मात्सर्वान्पाप्मन औषत्तस्मात्पुरुष ओषति ह वै स तं
 योऽस्मात्पूर्वो बुभूषति य एवं वेद ॥

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.1)

aham nāma abhavat; aham iti vyāharat—

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad declares that it was 'aham' that first came from Brahman. Therefore, that 'aham, aham' is running like a current within us unconsciously. To be fascinated by the inner throb of 'I' is a sure symptom of forthcoming Realisation! As our attention falls more and more on this experience of 'I', 'I' with a sense of wonder, existence will reveal its limitless timeless nature.

We will come to know that 'It' is not within the body at all. The One Reality alone exists and in THAT, this body is merely an appearance. The body and mind are merely appearances. That absolute *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta swarūpa*, that limitless non-dual Truth **alone** exists.



Chapter Eight

WAKE UP FROM THE DELUSION

Tripuṭi refers to three principles—the first of which is the ‘I’, the second is the world that this ‘I’ perceives, and the third is the knowledge which connects these two together, known as the mind. These three *puṭas*—*Pramāta*, *Pramāṇa* and *Prameya*, arise the instant the mind arises. They are not seen in *sushupti*, but upon waking, they appear before us at once. ‘I’ arises, then ‘you’, ‘he’ and so forth appear. It is in the states of *svapna* and *jāgrat* that *tripuṭi* plays about.

तद्युष्मदोरस्मदि संप्रतिष्ठा तस्मिन्विनष्टेऽस्मदि मूलबोधात्।

तद्युष्मदस्मन्मतिवर्जितैका स्थितिर्ज्वलन्ती सहजाऽत्मनः स्यात् ॥

(Saddarsanam 16)

‘You’ and ‘that’ are based on the ‘I’. When one goes to the root of the ‘I’, then the ‘you’ and ‘that’ will disappear. Then that non-dual natural state of Realisation shines forth.

‘You’ and ‘they’, ‘he’ and ‘she’ appear only when the sense ‘me’ prevails. When the nature of ‘me’ is sought, the ego-sense will cease to exist, and what shines then is the natural state in which all is one. Then, no longer are ‘you’, ‘they’, ‘he’ and ‘she’ separate from the One Whole. In the next hymn, various *dvandvas* are spoken of. *dvandva* means duality such as cause-effect, father-son, owner-property and teacher-taught. They are all based on the ‘I’ in which the

tripuṭis and *dvandvas* have their life. When the 'I' is no more, the world which is the seen, and along with that all relationships too will disappear, and Ātman alone will stand revealed.



VERSE EIGHT

विश्वं पश्यति कार्यकारणतया स्वस्वामिसम्बन्धतः
 शिष्याचार्यतया तथैव पितृपुत्राद्यात्मना भेदतः ।
 स्वप्ने जाग्रति वा य एष पुरुषो मायापरिभ्रामितः
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥८॥

*viśvaṃ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā svasvāmisambandhataḥ
 śiṣyācāryatayā tathaiva pitṛputrādyātmanā bhedataḥ ।
 svapne jāgrati vā ya eṣa puruṣo māyāparibhramitaḥ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥8॥*

The universe which is none other than the Ātman is seen as cause and effect, as possessor and possession, as father and son, and as teacher and taught, both in the state of waking and dreaming, deluded by *māyā*. To wake up from this delusion, we bow to that supreme teacher Dakshinamurti.

Free Poetic Rendering

The universe is nothing but the Self—the Ātman
 Alas! Awake or dreaming, caught in the whirlpool of *māyā*
 The deluded one misapprehends Him as many
 As cause and effect, teacher and taught, father and son,
 Servant and master in innumerable forms
 One word from the Master, anon vanish all duals,
 Ātman alone shines!
 That great fire of *Jñāna*, Dakshinamurti, we worship.

The Vision

In truth, what we experience is only God or Ātman. It is due to ignorance that we misapprehend Ātman as the world with innumerable differences. Both in the waking and dream states, one sees manifold forms. **viśvaṃ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā**—the world is seen as cause and effect such as, **svasvāmisaṃbandhataḥ**—master and servant or God and devotee, **śiṣyācāryatayā**—teacher and taught, **tathaiva pitṛputrādyaātmanā**—similarly also as father and son and so on. **bhedataḥ**—various plurality such as ‘I am the owner and that is my property’, or ‘I am the superior, he is my subordinate and he should obey me’ are seen. Thus, the ego is always at work to destroy the inner peace.

svapne jāgrati vā ya eṣa puruṣaḥ māyā-paribhrāmitaḥ—either in dream or in the waking state, this person is deluded by *māyā*. In ignorance, he misapprehends *Īśvara* as the world. When the right knowledge dawns, he dehypnotises himself and recognises the world as Brahman or *Īśvara*. **tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtaye**—for the right knowledge to dawn within us so that we wake up from this delusion, let’s prostrate to the Supreme Guru, Sri Dakshinamurti.

Bhagavatpada has given a few examples in this verse about how we delude ourselves to retain our individual sense, which is opposed to the state of *samādhi*. Deluded by *māyā*, we ourselves give various logic to retain the *dvaita*-

buddhi and hence get no way out from this suffering. Only the highest knowledge of Advaita, '**atmaivedaṃ sarvaṃ—the Self alone exists; nothing else exists other than that**', is the divine herb to release us from this suffering of plurality. The purpose of knowledge is to retain the *yoga-sthiti* or *samādhi* at all times, using any *prakriya* or process, so that the 'I' does not arise whatsoever.

यया यया भवेत् पुंसां व्युत्पत्तिः प्रत्यगात्मनि ।

सा सैव प्रक्रिया साध्वी विपरीता ततोऽन्यथा ॥

(Brihadaranyaka Varttika 2.104)

By whatever valid method a person arrives at the truth of the Self, all such methods are acceptable; there is no limit to the number of such methods.

The purpose of *Advaita Jñāna* is *Nirvikalpa*. And what is *Nirvikalpa*? It is the state of no disturbance. It is the knowledge that 'Ātman alone is. Self alone is'. We should always remain in this state of no-otherness; remove the world itself from one's vision! Abiding in that state where there is no world, no body, no 'I', no 'you' and so on, in that *mauna*, one will come face to face with Dakshinamurti.

Cause and Effect

Deluded by *māyā*, ***viśvaṃ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā***—we see God as something else in the waking and dream state. Here '*viśvaṃ*' means Paramātmā.

यस्माद्विष्टमिदं विश्वं यस्य शक्त्या महात्मनः ।

तस्मात्स प्रोच्यते विष्णुर्विशोर्धातोः प्रवेशनात् ॥

(Vishnu Purana 3.1.45)

Because the whole universe is permeated with His power, His name is Vishnu.

How does this world appear? ***viśvaṃ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā***—everything in the world appears with a cause-effect relationship—this is *māyā*. Our brain gets caught in this cause-effect phenomenon. In fact, all fields of modern science can be placed within this circle of cause-effect relationship. ‘This is the effect, and therefore it must have a preceding cause, let’s find out the cause for this effect. Thus continues this never-ending chain of effect-cause-effect-cause-effect-cause phenomenon’—this is how science works and this phenomenon is well-accepted in the world.

All objective knowledge is like this—it is only partially true. If something is completely irrational we wouldn’t believe it at all; for example, nobody will believe in the horn of a hare. This is not so with objective knowledge, as it appears as if true! With all the scientific logic that is thrown at us, we feel that the analysis is very logical and very correct, and so we choose to believe it and place our attention on it. Once our mind is attracted to it, even though the rest is utter baloney, we continue to accept it without questioning, and this will ultimately lead us to confusion and chaos! It is like crossing half a well! Once someone said that

it is very difficult to cross the well at one go. So, he suggested, 'Let's cross half of the well first and then cross the other half later!' Can we cross a well like this? Such are the half-baked enthusiasts who come forward with zeal to guide others.

As ridiculous as this, are all the phenomena which presuppose a **kārya-kāraṇa** (cause-effect) relationship as their foundation. All such fantastic analyses will ultimately end in knotty dichotomies such as: 'Which came first—the hen or the egg? Which appeared first—the seed or the tree?' Egg is the cause for the hen, and hen is the cause for the egg—how is it possible to transcend this problem? This is *āpekshikata* (relativity).

In truth, there is no duality at all. There exists only one—either the hen exists, or the egg exists; they do not exist simultaneously. There is one hen which lays an egg, and from that egg comes a hen and so on. So, at any time, there will either exist an egg or a hen. Both cannot exist at the same time. If the egg is broken it will become one with the earth; the hen too, once it dies it will become one with the earth—"vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyam mṛttiketyeva satyam."⁴⁸ Upanishad says, "My dear, just as by a single clod of clay all that is made of clay becomes known, all modifications being only names arising from speech, the

⁴⁸ Chandogya Upanishad 6.1.4

truth is that the clay alone is real." In this case, earth or mud alone is real—neither the hen nor the egg! It is the same thing that stands as an egg, or as a hen, or as a seed, or a tree. This question about 'hen or egg' merely gives the lazy brains some meaningless work! **Neither cause nor effect exists; Ātman alone exists. Accept this and jump out of this rigmarole.** Repose in the stillness of the Self. "*ekameva aditīyaṃ neha nānāsti kincana*. One alone without a second. Not even a trace of manifoldness exists here", is the declaration of *Śruti*.

No-otherness

When Paul Brunton sat in the presence of Bhagavan Ramana, his intellect became quiet. He has described this experience as follows: "I came to ask all sorts of things, but all questions just melted away. Now a rare insight comes to me—I come to know that it is the intellect which creates its own problems and becomes miserable by trying to solve them." The intellect keeps asking all sorts of things and then wanders about trying to find some fantastic answers—"*adhyavasāyalakṣaṇā na viceṣṭati svavyāpāreṣu na viceṣṭate na vyāpriyate, tāmāhuḥ paramāṃ gatim*."⁴⁹ When the intellect becomes quiet, then we will realise that there is no duality—there are no two.

⁴⁹ Kathopanishad Bhashya 2.6.10

There is neither cause nor effect; both are simply delusions of the mind. Once the mind becomes quiet, all these questions about cause-effect relationships will stop and all fantastic tales told by *māyā* will come to an end. So too all other relationships.

svasvāmī sambandhataḥ—master and servant relationship, God-devotee relationship or possessor-property relationship. These kinds of relationships are waves of thoughts that appear in the mind. These should be removed by the meditation ‘All is Ātman.’

śiṣyācāryatayā—a teacher-taught relationship or I am a teacher, and another is my disciple. Even the teacher-taught relationship is a knot. The teacher should be in the non-dual state and the disciple should behold Brahman, and not a person, in the Guru.

tathaiva pitṛputrādyātmanā bhedataḥ—father-son relationship. Similarly, innumerable relationships are present in the world. The fundamental problem with these assumptions such as master, father and son is that they force one to retain the ego sense, which is the sole seed for all miseries.

“*nischalatattve jīvanmuktiḥ*”, says Acharya in Bhaja Govindam. When the mind becomes quiet, all these differences will end. These differences are seen in *svapna* and *jāgrat*, but they disappear completely in *sushupti*. All these are mere delusions. They come about only when the

mind arises—when the ‘I’ arises. It is only when the ‘I’ arises that ‘you’, ‘he’ and so forth arise too.

If the ‘I’ arises not, then there exists the pure awareness—*Chit*. In that Consciousness, there is no other thing. Anything ‘other’ is possible only when thoughts arise—when there are no thoughts where is the other? The ‘I’ arises only when thought arises; and if the ‘I’ does not arise, then, neither do ‘you’, ‘he’ and so on.

‘*akhandākāra vṛtti*’ will remove all other *vṛttis*. When *avidyā vṛttis* end, this meditation also ends. Only stillness, Brahman prevails. Bhagavatpada speaks about this in Vivekachudamani as *samādhi pariśīlanam* or the practice of *samādhi*.

त्वमहमिदमितीयं कल्पना बुद्धिदोषा -

त्प्रभवति परमात्मन्यद्वये निर्विशेषे ।

प्रविलसति समाधावस्य सर्वो विकल्पो

विलयनमुपगच्छेद्वस्तुतत्त्वावधृत्या ॥ (Vivekachudamani 355)

Here, ‘*samādhi*’ means *vastu tattvajñāna* or knowing the Reality. Due to flaw in intelligence, these ‘you’, ‘I’, ‘this’ and such arise in the non-dual Paramātma. In the *Samādhi* state, all these *vikalpas* (imaginations) merge due to the clear perception of the Reality. *Tattvajñāna* is *samādhi*.

तत्त्वावबोधो भगवन्सर्वाशातृणपावकः ।

प्रोक्तः समाधिशब्देन नतु तूष्णीमवस्थितिः ॥

(Yoga Vasishta 5.62.8)

Real knowledge of the Self is like a fire that burns all desires. This alone is called as *Samādhī*. It is not mere physical stillness.

Samādhī is not a dull state. It is a state of clear perception—a state of absolute clarity. In *samādhī*, the mind is absolutely still, and hence, ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘he’ are not there. One is not sleeping either, as in *sushupti*. If we remain with full awareness in *jāgrat*, without the perceptions of ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘he’, what remains? **Awareness** alone remains; then that self-effulgent Consciousness shines forth! Once we get a taste of this *samādhī* experience, we will come to know that these so-called states of *jāgrat*, *svapna* and *sushupti* (*tripuṭi*) are mere delusions and nothing more!

धूल्यन्धकारधूमाभ्रनिर्मुक्तगगनोपमम् ।

विवेकसमये शुद्धं देहादीनां व्यपोहनात् ॥ (Manasollasa 4.32)

During *vichāra*, the Pure Self shines forth like the clear sky which is free of dust, darkness, smoke and clouds.

The Process of Perception

Let us focus our attention on the phenomenon of us seeing another—the phenomenon of ‘my seeing you’ seems to happen in a moment, now, here, instantaneously. However, when the ‘I’ experience alone is present, I do not see you. But the moment I see ‘you’, the ‘I’ is not there. And it happens so swiftly; ‘I’ ‘seeing’ ‘you’—all these three seem to happen simultaneously. In knowing, either ‘you’ or ‘I’ or ‘he’ alone can be present at any instant—there can be no

tripuṭi at all. However, as this takes place in quick succession, we are not aware of it. This 'I', 'you' and 'he' are mere thoughts appearing in pure consciousness. In fact, at any moment only one thought can be present—either 'I', or 'you', or 'he'. They slide by so swiftly that we fail to recognise the illusion behind these thought bubbles. We will come to realise this only in the *samādhi* state.

Samādhi means stillness of mental fluctuations where one clearly becomes aware of the Self. Mind is *avidyā*, which, like a cloud, covers the real Self. By silencing the thoughts, Pure consciousness reveals itself devoid of body, mind or other limitations.

Once we know this, once one has clearly seen the *Chaitanya* in one's Heart, all *tripuṭis* and *dvandvas* vanish. Then, according to one's destiny, when one comes back, the mind arises and once again we take ourselves to be 'I am so and so', and all the worldly interactions arise again. But the difference is, just as a man playing the role of a woman in a drama will never take himself to be a woman, similarly, once we have experienced the Supreme Consciousness, we will no longer get deluded by appearances.

The man in the drama need not keep thinking that he is a man—there is no effort involved at all. He need not meditate, 'I am a man, I am a man.' Whether he has removed the costume or even while in it, he simply knows that he is a man. Will he ever feel, 'Oh, if I act as a woman I

might forget that I am a man?' He will never be afraid of losing his real identity, however well he may act as a woman. Similarly, once we know who we really are, whatever worldly interactions one must undertake due to destiny, we will never ever forget our real nature.



Chapter Nine

THE WORLD IS SIVA

This sacred hymn starts with the word '*viśvam*' and ends with the declaration that the whole world is Siva in His eightfold form. All the verses in between prove that whatever is perceived as the world is nothing but *māyā*. We started this commentary by describing *viśvam* as a *saṃsāra vṛksha* that arises from the primal seed, but the Upanishad says that this *saṃsāra vṛksha* which arises from the *Brahmabīja*, is also Brahman, Siva.

यस्मात्परं नापरमस्ति किञ्चित् यस्मान्नाणीयो न ज्यायोऽस्ति कश्चित् ।

वृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येकस्तेनेदं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम् ॥

(Mahanarayanopanishad 12.13)

Other than whom there is nothing higher, nothing minuter, nothing greater, by that *Purusha*—the one who stands still like a tree, established in His own self-supporting glory—all this is filled.

Nothing else exists other than *Īśvara*, *Ātman*. In fact, this Dakshinamurti Stotra can be considered as a commentary for the Upanishadic mantra '*īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat*'—whatsoever is seen as the world is to be known as God. "*idaṃ hi viśvaṃ bhagavān*—this Universe is indeed God; *itarah iva bhāti*—but appears as other. To remove this ignorance, go to the Master and receive knowledge", says Bhagavata.

जगत ईशधीयुक्तसेवनम् ।

अष्टमूर्तिभूदेवपूजनम् ॥

(Upadesa Sara 5)

Service of the world with the understanding that it is God, is worship of Siva in His eightfold form.

A *Jñāni* looks at the universe as a form of *Ashṭamūrti*, or as a form of Siva. *Ashṭamūrti* is another name for Siva or *Īśvara*; it refers to the eight different forms of Siva—the *panchabhūtas* (five elements), sun, moon and life principle or *purusha*. All these put together is known as *Ashṭamūrti*. See what the poet Kalidasa says.

तत्राग्निमाधाय समित्समिद्धं स्वमेव मूर्त्यन्तरमष्टमूर्तिः ।

स्वयं विधाता तपसः फलानाम्केनापि कामेन तपश्चचार ॥

(Kumara Sambhava 1.57)

Fire is one of the eight forms of Siva. Lighting a fire in front, Siva is doing penance. He is the Lord who gives boon to all who perform *tapas*. Still He Himself is meditating with some hidden desire!

Lord Krishna says:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 7.4)

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and personality—this is the eightfold division of My manifested Nature.

This is the subject of the ninth verse.

VERSE NINE

भूरम्भांस्यनलोऽनिलोऽम्बरमहर्नाथो हिमांशुः पुमान्
 इत्याभाति चराचरात्मकमिदं यस्यैव मूर्त्यष्टकम् ।
 नान्यत् किञ्चन विद्यते विमृशतां यस्मात्परस्माद्विभोः
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥९॥

*bhūrambhāṃsyanalo'nilo'mbaramaharnātho himāṃśuḥ pumān
 ityābhāti carācarātmakamidam yasyaiva mūrtyaṣṭakam ।
 nānyat kiñcana vidyate vimṛśatām yasmātparasmādvibhoḥ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥९॥*

He, whose eightfold forms are the 'earth, water, fire, air, ether, sun, moon and *jīva*', and who manifests Himself as this universe of the movable and immovable objects, and besides Whom, the Supreme all-pervading Lord, there exists nothing else to those who reflect well, to Him, the divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

Free Poetic Rendering

All that is visible, the moving and the static is He
 Earth, water, fire, air, ether—the five elements, are He
 The splendorous sun is nothing but He
 The nourisher of herbs, the comely moon, is verily He
 The inner throb of life, *jīva*, is indeed He
 He is the *Ashṭamūrti*, Siva with eightfold forms!
 When probed into, the chaff of names and forms fall off
 Behold! He alone stands revealed as the One Whole!
 The Omnipresent Being, Dakshinamurti, our refuge.

Ashṭamūrti

bhūrambhāṃsyano'nilo'mbaram aharnātho himāṃśuḥ pumān—*bhūḥ* means earth, *ambhāṃsi* means water, *analaḥ* means fire, *anilaḥ* means air, *ambaram* means space, *aharnāthaḥ* means sun, *himāṃśuḥ* means moon, and *pumān* means *jīvabhāva* which appears as individuality. ***iti ābhāti idaṃ carācarātmakaṃ***—thus shines forth this *charā-acharā* moving and unmoving universe. All these make the body of *Īśvara*—‘*chidachit śarīra*’. ***yasyaiva mūrtyaṣṭakam***—He is of eight forms. For the one who has known the Truth, every one of these eight appears as the form of *Īśvara* Himself; to him each of these appears as God Himself. There are temples representing each of these eight forms in various parts of India.

vimṛśatām—to those who analyse, ***nānyat kiñcana vidyate***—nothing else exists other than ***yasmāt parasmāt vibhoḥ***—that Supreme Being who is all-pervading as these eightfold forms. Whatever is felt is He, only Siva. ***tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye***—to that divine teacher, Sri Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

विश्वं भूतं भुवनं चित्रं बहुधा जातं जायमानं च यत् ।

सर्वो ह्येष रुद्रस्तस्मै रुद्राय नमो अस्तु ॥

(Mahanarayanopanishad 21.1)

The universe, the created beings, and whatever has been manifoldly created in the past, in the present and in the form of the world—all that is indeed this Rudra, Siva. Salutations be to Rudra who is such.

Whatever is smelt is Ātman; **bhūḥ** or earth. '*gandhavatī prthvī*.' The characteristic of earth is smell. Whatever is tasted is Ātman; **ambhāṃsi** or water. Taste is water. Whatever is seen is Ātman; **analaḥ** or fire. Eyes are formed from the fire element. Whatever is touched is Ātman; **anilaḥ** or air. '*sparsāvān vāyuh*.' Touch is the characteristic of wind or air. Whatever is heard is Ātman; **ambaram** or space. '*śabdaguṇakaṃ ākāśam*.' Ears are formed from *ākāśa*. The discriminating faculty, the intellect, is Ātman; **aharnāthaḥ** or sun. Whatever is thought about is Ātman; all our thoughts are Ātman alone. The mind is formed from moon or **himāṃsuḥ**. The ego or the *abhimāna vṛtti* which arises as 'I'—**pumān**, is also Ātman.

Nothing else exists other than *Īśvara* or Ātman. Whatever is felt is He alone—Siva! The entire phenomena of perception, feeling, thinking, discrimination, self-image and so on are all nothing but the Ātman alone. They are like the various bubbles, waves and eddies arising in the ocean of consciousness. Once we know that they are made of water, even when the various names and forms of bubbles, waves and eddies are seen, we know without a doubt that water alone exists. Similarly, whatever names and forms are seen in the world, we know that they are nothing but Ātman or Consciousness. Then we have *Advaita*.

यथा नभसि मेघौघो रेणुर्वा पार्थिवोऽनिले ।

एवं द्रष्टरि दृश्यत्वमारोपितमबुद्धिभिः ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata 1.3.31)

As clouds in the sky or dust in the wind, the seen is superimposed on the seer by ignorant ones.

The seen has no existence apart from the seer, just as dreams have no existence separate from the dreamer. So too, the world has no separate existence from the Self.

Viśvam as world is imperfect, while *viśvam* as Brahman is perfect. Even with all its so-called imperfections, as Brahman, it is perfect. Perfection comes from *jñānadṛṣhti*. That is the way to look at the world. Learn to call it Brahman. Both good and bad are He. “*virūpebhyo viśvarūpebhyaśca namaḥ*—prostrations to the ugly one, the formless one and to the one who is beautiful as the universe”, says Veda.

Zero and Eight

In arithmetic, zero is whole. The way we draw zero (0), it is complete. It cannot be extended further in any direction, and so it is known as *pūjya* or the adorable one. The numerals one, two, and so on all have a head and a tail, and hence they are incomplete. *Pūjya* (zero) is like Brahman when it is *nirguṇa* or in the state of *nirvikalpa* (without attributes). The number eight too is like Brahman when it is the universe. Surprisingly, the number eight is also whole; however, it is so in a twisted way—‘8’! It too is complete as it cannot be extended further and there is nothing left hanging. In fact, when we twist zero it turns into eight; eight is but a strangulated zero! If we twist the gasket of a pressure cooker, it takes the shape of an eight, and when

released, it regains its zerohood! So then, we are seeing the world as a twisted zero!

In Malayalam, there is a way of referring to someone who is a fool: *ettum pottum ariyaattha moodhan*—he, the fool knows neither eight nor zero! The one who knows both of these is complete! He knows both the manifest and the unmanifest.

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

(Isavasya Upanishad)

That is Whole, this is Whole, from Whole manifests whole. When the whole is taken from the Whole what remains is the Whole alone!

If both these (knowledge of the manifest and the unmanifest) become perfect, then one is complete. Such a one does not lose completeness even while engaged in worldly interactions in the *jāgrat* state. Even when he sits in meditation with eyes closed, or while involved in the world, he does not lose his completeness. Such a *Jñāni* sees the entire body of the universe as *asṭamūrti swarūpa*—as the eightfold form of Siva.

The great devotee Prahlada says in Bhagavata:

त्वं वायुरग्निरवनिर्वियदम्बु मात्राः

प्राणेन्द्रियाणि हृदयं चिदनुग्रहश्च ।

सर्वं त्वमेव सगुणो विगुणश्च भूमन्

नान्यत् त्वदस्त्यपि मनो वचसा निरुक्तम् ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata 7.9.48)

O Lord, the Infinite One!

Air, fire, earth, space, elements of water are all You.

My breath—*prāṇa*, senses, mind, heart, awareness

The power of Grace, I behold as You.

Both good and bad are You

Whatever is felt with the senses and the mind are nothing
but You

One who comes to this conclusion goes beyond all
*sādhana*s

Becomes absolutely quiet, relieved of all efforts.

To him the entire cosmos stands transfigured as God!

Thus, if the Truth as revealed in this Dakshinamurti Stotra is properly understood, one will behold the world—*viśvam*, as God Himself and supreme beatitude will be attained. We started this hymn with *viśvam* as world and here we conclude that *viśvam* is God Himself. When we gain this experience, then we will recognise the *Īśvara bhāva* of ‘*aham*’. This is the topic of the next verse.



Chapter Ten

THE SUPREME GLORY

A sage once said, "You walk because you do not know that you can run. You run because you do not know that you can fly. You fly because you do not know that you are the space." That knowledge of Infinity is the supreme power. This concluding verse proclaims that knowledge of Infinity is the fruit of this hymn.



VERSE TEN

सर्वात्मत्वमिति स्फुटीकृतमिदं यस्मादमुष्मिन् स्तवे
 तेनास्य श्रवणात्तदर्थमननाद्यानाच्च संकीर्तनात् ।
 सर्वात्मत्वमहाविभूतिसहितं स्यादीश्वरत्वं स्वतः
 सिद्ध्येत्तत्पुनरष्टधा परिणतं चैश्वर्यमव्याहतम् ॥ १० ॥

*sarvātmatvamiti sphuṭīkṛtamidaṃ yasmādamuṣmin stave
 tenāsyā śravaṇāttadarthamananāddhyānācca saṃkīrtanāt ।*

*sarvātmatvamahāvibhūtisahitaṃ syādīśvaratvaṃ svataḥ
 siddhyettatpunaraṣṭadhā pariṇataṃ caīśvaryamavyāhataṃ ॥10॥*

The knowledge ‘all-this-is-Ātman’ or Oneness (*sarvātmatvam*), has been explained very clearly in this hymn and so, by hearing it, reflecting upon it, meditating upon its meaning and by reciting it, one will attain that divine state, endowed with the divine glory of the all-Selfhood, along with the permanent eightfold holy powers of Godhood.

Free Poetic Rendering

‘My Self is the Self in all’—this highest spiritual experience
 Is the nature of Realisation extolled clearly in this hymn
 By mere listening, reflection of the import
 By deep contemplation and singing with delight
 In him the supreme cosmic-consciousness descends
 All the eightfold powers of *Īśvara* manifest naturally
 O the immeasurable glory of Dakshinamurti hymn!

The Fruit of Realisation

sarvātmatvaṃ iti—the knowledge that ‘all this is Ātman’, *yasmād*—as, *amuṣmin stave*—in this hymn, *sphuṭīkṛtaṃ idaṃ*—has been distilled and made available now. *tenāsya śravaṇāt*—and so, by listening to this, *tadartha mananāt*—by contemplating on its implied meaning, *dhyānāt*—by deeply meditating on it, *saṃkīrtanāt ca*—and by reciting with devotion, then, *sarvātmatva-mahāvibhūti sahitam*—along with the great knowledge that ‘I am the Self of all’, *syāt*—if needed, will be there. *Īśvaratvaṃ svataḥ siddhyet tat punaḥ aṣṭadhā pariṇataṃ ca aiśvaryaṃ avyāhatam*—Godhood and the eightfold *siddhis* (powers of *Īśvara*) will come to him without any obstacle.

That is, upon listening to this Dakshinamurti Stotra, and then meditating on it, reflecting on its meaning, and then reciting it, if we come to know it properly, then we will gain *sarvātmatva mahāvibhūti*, and along with that *Īśvaratva* and eightfold powers.

Wherever there is a special manifestation of divinity, it is called *vibhūti*. Wherever divinity shines forth, all that is *vibhūti*. In Vibhūti Yoga of Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna speaks about the Self as the greatest *vibhūti*, and only later on talks of other *vibhūtis*.

गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 10.20)

I am the Self, O Arjuna, dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

Ātman is the ***mahāvibhūti!*** It is only by taking some of Ātman's boundless *vibhūti* that manifestations happen here and there.

When seen through the usual style of our *stotras*, we may take this *śloka* to be just a hyperbole (*arthavāda*)—anything can be said in a *phala śruti* such as 'you will go to Kailasa', 'you will go to Vaikunta' and so on. By knowing this Dakshinamurti Stotra how will one get *Sarvātmavam* or *Īśvaratvam*? This doubt might arise in a seeker. But this statement is not a hyperbole. '***Sarvātmavam***' is the real fruit of this knowledge.

Let us understand what is meant by these terms—*sarvātmavam* and *Īśvaratvam*. ***Sarvātmavam*** means an existence without the localised experience of 'I', or, in other words, our *ekadesīya satta* or localised individuality vanishes without a trace. It is not that one becomes God, but that one ceases to remain separate from God or the Universal Being. This is a common misconception about the term *Īśvaratvam*. The general fallacy is that *advaita* means the 'me' or the individual becomes *Īśvara*. It is not so. No 'becoming' is

involved here. The very nature of being, existence is godhood. When the right knowledge dawns, you come to know that there remains no separate 'I' apart from *Īśvara*. The 'I' no longer sees itself as separate from *Īśvara*. It is like the *taraṅga* (wave) merging in the *tāraṅga* (ocean). The wave goes into the ocean; in fact, it becomes the ocean; it is the ocean. Then, if it once again comes back as a wave, it is empowered by the conviction of the knowledge that 'I am the ocean; I am not separate from the ocean.' Similarly, even if one comes back to the plane of ego after realisation, one comes with the full conviction that Brahman alone exists and that one is not separate from That. This is what is meant by *Sarvātmavam* and *Īśvaratvam*.

At the bodily level, no *Jñāni* has ever declared that he is greater than others. *Samatva*—equality arises on the firm ground of realisation. This is because, *Īśvaratvam* is not at the bodily level, but only in the *swarūpa*. *Īśvaratvam* is not in the *upādhi*—we need to understand this well. With the eye of *Jñāna*, he sees that *Īśvara* alone is, and that there is no 'I' apart from Him. When we gain that divisionless vision that is devoid of 'I', 'you' and so on, only then can we call it *Sarvātma Bhāva*—the experience of the one Self in all.

So, if we seek to know this 'I' and if we understand this 'I', we will come to know that it is not separate from the Supreme. We know that water is not apart from the ocean; and once we know water, then we also know the ocean, the bubble, the wave or ice. Similarly, the one who knows that

the *aham* is not separate from *Īśvara*—he becomes omniscient, he becomes the all-doer, the omnipotent Being! In fact, it is not becoming. He just realises that his real Self is eternally omniscient and omnipotent, and that his ego is always non-existent.

This appears in Chandogya Upanishad as *Śāndilya vidyā*—Paramātmā is the one who experiences everything and who does everything.

एष म आत्मान्तर्हृदयेऽणीयान्त्रीहेर्वा यवाद्वा सर्षपाद्वा श्यामाकाद्वा
श्यामाकतण्डुलाद्वैष म आत्मान्तर्हृदये ज्यायान्पृथिव्या
ज्यायानन्तरिक्षाज्यायान्दिवो ज्यायानेभ्यो लोकेभ्यः ॥

This Self in me, in my heart, is subtler than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, or a mustard seed, or a grain of millet; greater than the earth, vaster than the sky and more profound than heaven. He, the Self within the heart, transcends all these worlds.

सर्वकर्मा सर्वकामः सर्वगन्धः सर्वरसः सर्वमिदमभ्यात्तोऽवाक्यनादर एष
म आत्मान्तर्हृदय एतद्ब्रह्मैतमितः प्रेत्याभिसंभवितास्मीति यस्य स्यादद्वा
न विचिकित्सास्तीति ह स्माह शाण्डिल्यः शाण्डिल्यः ॥

(Chandogya Upanishad 3.14 3-4)

He, whose creation is all that exists, whose are all the desires, who possesses all the odours and all the tastes, who exists pervading all this, who is without speech (and other senses), who is free from agitation and eagerness, He is my Self residing in the Heart—He is Brahman. On departing hence, I shall attain to His

being. Verily, whosoever has this trust, for him there is no uncertainty. Thus declared Śāndilya, and so it is.

सकृत्प्रसक्तमात्रोऽपि सर्वात्मत्व यदृच्छया ॥

सर्वपापविनिर्मुक्तः शिवलोके महीयते ।

If one is established—even by chance—in universal Selfhood, then, absolved of all sins, he will be venerated in the world of Siva. Even a glimpse of that *Brahmānubhava* will cleanse one of all the sins.

सर्वात्मभावना यस्य परिपक्वा महात्मनः ।

संसारतारकः साक्षात्स एव परमेश्वरः ॥ (Manasollasa 3.37-38)

That great one in whom the universal Selfhood has become perfectly mature, He is verily the Supreme Lord who is capable of taking others beyond *saṃsāra* (transmigration).

Such a mighty *jīvanmukta* can transmit Self-knowledge to the disciple by mere 'WILL'.

Listen, Reflect, Contemplate & Sing

tenāsyā śravaṇāt—so by listening; **tadārtha mananāt**—by contemplating on its implied meaning; **dhyānāt**—by deeply meditating on it. We need to sit in solitude and reflect deeply on the import. When pure consciousness radiates in the Heart as the result of reflection, then and only then does real meditation happen. Meditation is the effulgence of the Inner Being! Just as the fire that appears after much churning of the rods, the awareness of Ātman becomes aflame in the heart due to constant reflection—

'jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ' (Mundaka Upanishad). Then the objectless thoughtless pure Existence, Awareness and Bliss is revealed. This is *dhyāna*.

saṁkīrtanāt ca—one should also recite this śloka. Each word that has come out of Bhagavatpada is soaked with his Grace. His *Chit-Śakti* is instilled in each word of this hymn—therefore, one should recite it devoutly. Besides that, until we gain the experience, constantly listening to and reciting the verses are powerful spiritual practices by themselves. Discussing the meaning with authentic masters is also ***saṁkīrtana***. *Śravaṇa* should be done from a *Śrotriya Brahmanishṭha*. Then, one should do *manana* of the meaning in solitude. Then, ***dhyānā*** or *nididhyāsana*—one should constantly abide in that state. When awake, one should speak about it—*saṁkīrtana*. No time should be given for the mind to dissipate in worldly thinking.

Ramana Bhagavan has talked about *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* as purely internal practices—*āntarika śravaṇa*, *āntarika manana* and *āntarika nididhyāsana*. If we observe within us carefully, we'll be able to hear our personality pulsating as 'I', 'I', 'I' inside—this is the I-thought or *aham-vṛtti*. This will be very evident during each movement of our ego or during all our activities as well. Actively listening to this *aham-vṛtti* is *āntarika śravaṇa*. When we continue to hold on to this I-thought within, and keep it separate by not allowing it to get mixed up with other thoughts or emotions,

it becomes *aham-sphūrti*. This is *āntarika manana*. When we pour all our attention on this *aham-sphūrti*, it will slowly disassociate itself from the body, mind, intellect and so on, and shine as pure Awareness—*aham-bodha*. This is *āntarika nididhyāsana*. The real *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* has to happen inside in this way. The external *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* that is done by depending on the intellect prepares one to plunge within. It is only when *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana* becomes *āntarika*, will there be *pūrṇata* or completion.

Then, *sarvātmavamahāvibhūti*—*sarvātmava*, or the experience of ‘I am the Self of all’ blooms in the heart gloriously, silently, tenderly like a fragrant flower. Slowly, one gains the insight that ‘I am not this person residing in this body, but I am the One who is inside everyone as the ever-present absolute Reality!’ “*apakṛṣyamāṇāyām avidyāyām vidyāyām ca kāṣṭhām gatāyām sarvātmabhāvaḥ mokṣaḥ*.”⁵⁰ When ignorance is destroyed, and knowledge reaches its zenith, *sarvātmabhāva* (the awareness that ‘I am everything’) will arise. This is liberation.”

What exists is only one whole. It is seen as the world, incidents, emotions, objects, people or knowledge. Know that the Ātman alone appears as all. Ātman alone appears as objects, emotions and thinker. Ātman alone is. This Advaitic

⁵⁰ Brihadaranyaka Bhashya

knowledge becomes so powerfully alive in the enlightened that it would be beheld with awe as a *vibhūti*—glory of God, by the devout.

This experience is what is called as ***mahāvibhūti***—this awareness itself is the greatest manifestation of Ātman. Along with that, the sage feels one with God—*Īśvaratva*. He feels ‘all the powers in the universe are mine’. It is not that one will newly gain any special powers, but all the powers present in the universe become available for him as he becomes one with *Īśvara*.

Everything that takes place in this world is a *siddhi* (manifestation of power). Everything around us is a *mahāvibhūti*, and once we merge into that, and if something is necessary—the word used here is ‘***syāt***’—that is, if needed, it will manifest. ***Īśvaratvaṃ svataḥ siddhyet tat punaḥ aṣṭadhā pariṇataṃ ca aiśvaryaṃ avyāhatam***—Godhood and the eightfold *siddhis* (powers of *Īśvara*) will come to him without any obstacle. But the sage will no more seek any powers. When one gains *Ātmajñāna*, a great contentment blooms within, and no longer is there any desire or self-will—one will want nothing at all. The *Jñāni*’s individual will merges with *Īśvara*’s Cosmic Will. However, if that *Śakti* so wishes, anything can happen through his body. This is why Acharya says ‘***syāt***’—it can be.

स्थित्युद्भवप्रलयहेतुरहेतुरस्य यत्स्वप्नजागरसुषुप्तिषु सद्बहिश्च ।
देहेन्द्रियासुहृदयानि चरन्ति येन सञ्जीवितानि तदवेहि परं नरेन्द्र ॥

(Srimad Bhagavata, Navayogi Upakhyana)

Creation, sustenance and destruction happen in the world by Him. The same power causes waking, dream and deep sleep states inside. The one changeless existence is behind all these phenomena. He makes the body, the senses and the mind alive and dynamic. He is the Supreme.

The above verse is from Srimad Bhagavata. Closely observe this verse. Does this verse speak about the Self or God? Both are One. To resolve this mystery is realisation! This can never be imagined in the state of ignorance. This knowledge or Awareness is called *Mahāvibhūti*.

Reflect Deeply

Whatever happens in nature, he feels he is doing it. Sankaracharya says that that sort of Oneness will come about. In our body, the heart, kidney and other organs work by the power of the Self. Blood flows, respiration happens by the power of the same Life Principle. But we are not conscious of them. The entire cosmos works activated by the same power even though the ego is unaware of them.

That Bhagavan, in the form of Dakshinamurti, may He radiate in the Heart; may that Paramesvara radiate in the Heart!

Bhagavan Ramana has said:

*viṇḍidu viḷakkiḍu viṇḍaluru vōnār
viṇḍilai paṇḍunī viḷakkinai yendṛal
viṇḍiḍā dunnilai viḷakkiḍa vendrē
viṇḍalam acalamā viḷaṅgiḍa ninḍrāi*

(Sri Arunachala Ashtakam 2)

Who has the power to reveal the state of Self-experience by speaking, when, in ancient times even You, as Dakshinamurti, revealed it only through silence? Only to reveal Your true state of Self-experience through Silence, You stood shining as Arunachala rising from earth to sky.

“If you remain silent, can anyone else speak and explain that *mauna*?” Therefore, “You yourself have to come and explain it.” Thus, Dakshinamurti Himself came as Sankaracharya and gave us this sacred hymn—Dakshinamurti Stotra. Due to his *kṛpā* alone, we too recite and meditate upon it even after so many years. In times to come, many will recite and meditate upon it and receive his Grace.

Seek the 'I', told the Master
And the mind was fascinated by the inner throb of 'I', 'I'
The 'I' was sought by me
The 'I' merged in the 'I', 'I' and remained as 'I', 'I'
What was the nature of that residue
I am the wind, I am the earth
I am the space, I am the fire
I shine forth as the sun, I as moon spread cool rays
I crowd the sky as rain clouds
And lo! Shower forth nectar of life!
I am the ant that toils in a queue
And I am the lion that roars
I am the river that flows
I am the vast majestic ocean
I am the saint, I am the sinner
I am all that is seen and the seer too.

OM



SOME PRECIOUS INSIGHTS

Some insightful excerpts from ***Atmatirtham—Life and Teachings of Sri Sankaracharya***, are made available here for contemplation.

Excerpt One - Gaudapadakarika Bhashyavani

Q: What is the nature of sleep?

A: '*tattvāpratibodho nidrā* (Bhashya)—not knowing the Truth is sleep'. Ignorance itself is sleep. The mind is the outcome of sleep that is ignorance. Mind itself is dream and wakefulness. Deep sleep, devoid of the knowledge of Ātman, is the form of ignorance—*kevala avidyā*. In waking and dream states, there is non-apprehension (*agrahaṇa*) as well as misapprehension (*anyathā grahaṇa*). In deep sleep, there is only non-apprehension. (Not knowing the object as it is, is non-apprehension; for example, not seeing the rope in darkness. Seeing the object as something else, that is, seeing the rope as a snake, is misapprehension. Similarly, not knowing one's Self is non-apprehension, and seeing multiplicity is misapprehension).

Q: What is *avidyā*?

A: '*ātmanaḥ asphūrttiḥ avidyā*—not recognising the ever-attained Self is ignorance.'

अन्यथा गृह्यतः स्वप्नो निद्रातत्त्वमजानतः ।

विपर्यासेतयोः क्षीणो तुरीयं पदमश्नुते ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 1.14)

nidrā prevails in waking, dream and deep sleep states. Awareness will dawn only if **avidyā** is annihilated by the Knowledge of the Self. When non-apprehension ceases, misapprehension will also cease. Only the—*chinmātraswarūpa*—the Absolute Consciousness, the Self, will remain.

In a profound *śloka* in Mandukya Karika, Paramacharya Gaudapada says thus:

अनादिमायया सुप्तो यदाजीवः प्रबुध्यते ।

अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नमद्वैतं बुध्यते तदा ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 16)

When the *jīva*, asleep due to the beginningless *māyā* wakes up, it awakens to the birthless, ever-wakeful, illusionless, non-dual Truth.

anidram bereft of the seed of ignorance
(*avidyātamōbījarahitam*)

ajam that which is birthless and is ever-
attained as Existence (*nityaprāpta*
astitvarūpam)

asvapnam that which is devoid of projection, which
is the result of ignorance.

One who does not sleep will not have dreams. The sleep of *avidyā* is the cause of the dream that is the world.

The only solution to this is recognising the nature of Ātman as Consciousness—*chitsvarūpagrahaṇam*. Recognising the Self itself is Awakening. The *jīva* that has been asleep since time immemorial wakes up only when the Self is known. This Awakening is what is meant when *Śruti* roars—*"Uttishṭhata. WAKE UP."* (Essence of Bhashya).

The *jīva* enmeshed in the world sees multiplicity without knowing the Truth. Remaining in the primal ignorance, 'I am so and so', he sees various dreams during the waking and dream states and thinks, 'this is my father, this is my son, this is my nephew, this is my land, house; these are my cattle; I am the owner of all these; this person has helped me; this person has cheated me' and so on.

At some point in time, when he comes in contact with a Guru who is a Knower of Truth and is full of compassion, the Guru initiates him into the Truth—"Whatever you think you are, is not the real 'you'. You are not anything that can be seen. You are that Knowledge that remains and stays, when you negate all the adjuncts like the body and mind. That itself is *turīya*. It is self-effulgent. There is no sleep or dream in it. It is pure Experiential Consciousness. Its nature is Absolute Experience, *Tattvamasi*." Then he becomes enlightened.



Excerpt Two - Dialogue between Acharya and Disciple

Vidyanandatirtha: Lord! I understand from Brihadaranyaka that there is only the experience of Brahman in deep sleep, and that one who knows this, 'reaches heaven day after day—*aharaharsvagaṃ lokameti*'. But Gaudapada says that *bījanidrā* prevails in deep sleep. Please clarify.

Acharya: Dear one! You are very insightful. Your lineage is blessed. Remarkable is your intelligence! Our blessings to your question! Be a *Brahmanishṭha*. This doubt comes to many seekers. We have been wondering who would raise this question.

Dear one! *vidyā* and *avidyā* exist in the waking state. The statement 'I did not know anything' is the '*bījanidrā*' (seed of ignorance) in deep sleep. In fact, this is the defect of the waking state and not of deep sleep. That cognition of the *bījanidrā* occurs only in the waking state. Only after waking up does one declare, 'nothing was known'. No one has ever grasped ignorance during deep sleep. If you say that Brahman remained there as happiness alone, and as one without a second, that is pure truth. But that is like saying that Ātman alone prevailed before creation. That experience is not of any use in the waking state. *Jñāna* and freedom from misery must happen here and now, in the waking state itself. That is why Brihadaranyaka says, '*ēvam vid*—one who knows as such'. Only the one who knows gets released.

The knower of Truth as well as the ignorant remain happy in deep sleep. But only the knower sees this happiness as the Self. That knowledge itself is *turīya*. That knowledge is the same as Consciousness that remains whole in deep sleep also. However, this knowledge must happen in the waking state. Self-awareness is not limited to deep sleep state alone. It is here and now, even in the waking state. That is why *Śruti* says *Ātman* is *sarvānubhūḥ*. Those who know the Truth have the same experience. The enlightened know that there is no one here who does not know the Self. But the knowledge of the Self, attained by conscious enquiry by employing the mind alone (*vṛttijñāna*) will lead to liberation; and that is possible only in the waking state.

The enquiry 'Who am I?' vanishes after illuminating the Self. The restfulness that one has in deep sleep is devoid of knowingness. But in the *samādhi* of the enlightened (*prajñā*) there is restfulness with awareness. Repose in the Heart is the *Samādhi* of the enlightened.

हार्दाकाशाख्यं ब्रह्मपूर्णं सर्वगतम् । यः एवं यथोक्तं... पूर्णं अप्रवर्त्तिगुणं
ब्रह्मवेद जानाति इहैव जीवंस्तद्भाव प्रतिपद्यते ।

(Chandogya Bhashya 3.12-13)

This Brahman known as Heart-space is all-pervading. One who knows this Whole, **Brahman**, which is of the nature of complete release from action, here, while living, attains oneness with that.

Q: Lord! What is the nature of the Self-Experience that is illumined by thoughts?

A: Ignorance is the source of all thoughts. The very nature of Ignorance is in the form of concepts. The 'I-thought' is the source of all other concepts. '*jīvaṃ kalpayate pūrvaṃ tato bhāvān prthagvidhān*' (Gaudapada Karika 2-16). These are the words of our Paramaguru (the Guru of the Guru). The very first sprout in the Pure Self is the 'I-thought'—the *jīva*. The series of thoughts such as 'I am doing', 'my joy', 'my sorrow', and so on come up after the rising of the ego as a separate individual in the pure Self, like the snake in a rope. After this first thought, manifold images like mind, intellect, *prāṇa*, body, senses and the world, seem to appear in the pure Ātman. Each *jīva* has its own peculiar instinctive and emotional body; that is its *bhāvaśarīra*. According to that illusory seed-body (*vidyāmayaśarīra*) all the memories, and concepts ensue. All these have the base in the primal self-imagined *jīva*.

Q: Why does the individual sense (*jīva kalpana*) arise?

A: Due to lack of right knowledge. Just as a rope appears to be a snake when it is not known as the rope, when one is not aware of the nature of the Self, the Infinite Self is regarded as a small limited individual 'I'. When deeply enquired, what this 'I' is, the 'I' along with the attributes like *prāṇa*, mind, intellect, *karma*, life, and so on, merges into the Pure-Conscious-Non-dual Existence, as the snake vanishes into the

rope in bright light. '*ityeṣaḥ sarvopaniṣadāṃ siddhāntaḥ*—this is the essence of all the Upanishads.' (Karika Bhashya)

Q: Will one be free of *saṃsāra* by such an enquiry?

A: Aha! The question of release arises only if *saṃsāra* does exist! The snake has never been on the rope at any time. In the same way *saṃsāra* was not there in Ātman at any time.

सर्वसंसारधर्मशून्य प्रतिपादक शास्त्रजनित विज्ञानसूर्यालोक

कृतात्मनिश्चयः 'आत्मैवेदं सर्वं इति' ।

(Bhashya)

The conviction of the Self, born of the brilliant sunlight of Self-Knowledge from the *śāstra*, reveals the absolute absence of all the characteristics of *saṃsāra* in the Self. This knowledge illumines that 'Everything here is only the Self.'

Q: How did the innumerable misconceptions (or differences) such as the *prāṇa* appear in the Ātman?

A: '*māyaiṣā tasyadevasya yayāyaṃ mohitaḥ svayam*'.⁵¹ This is the glory of God's *māyā*. He Himself playfully deludes Himself.' (Don't we ourselves enact and watch plays that have no real existence in waking state and see dreams, during sleep? There is no point in asking why we enjoy them.) 'Each one beholds the plane of consciousness that the inner-Lord unfolds to him. That is all.' That Omnipotent indweller reveals all these objects - the *prāṇas*, *bhūtas*, the three *guṇas*, *tattvas*, *lokas*, *devas*, *Vedas*, the enjoyer, the

⁵¹ Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 2.29

doer, the gross, the subtle, objects with form, objects without form, time, direction, arguments, mind, intellect, memory, righteousness, unrighteousness, the twenty-five *tattvas* or twenty-six *tattvas*, creation, dissolution, sustenance, destiny, vitality (*paurusha*), and so on—variously to each one. They see these respective principles and holding on to it, remain as the believers and proponents of their respective views. That is all. The Truth is this: '*lokavat tu līlākaivalyam*—what appears as the world is the delightful sport of *nirvāṇa*!' says the Vyasasutra.

न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिः न बद्धो न च साधकः

न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्तः इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 2.32)

There is neither dissolution nor creation. There is no one in bondage, no one striving for liberation and no one liberated. This is the highest Truth.

'*sarvoyaṃ laukiko vaidikaśca vyavahāraḥ avidyā viṣaya eva*—all the worldly and Vedic activities are rooted in ignorance only'. '*brahmaivedaṃ sarvaṃ*', '*idaṃ sarvaṃ yadayaṃ ātmā*', '*ekameva advitīyaṃ*'—these are the proclamations of *Śruti*. Duality is entirely absent in *samādhi* and deep sleep. Therefore, it is certain that duality arises only when the mind arises.

Q: Then how can one be free of superimpositions such as 'I am happy, I am sorrowful, I am foolish, I have birth, death,

and the sufferings of old age, all these relatives are mine' and so on?

A: “*ātmā eteṣvanugataḥ sarvatra avyabhicārāt*—the presence of *Ātman* as 'I-Consciousness' remains changeless behind all notions such as joy and sorrow.” Ignoring the moods such as joy, sorrow, and dejection, one must hold the pure awareness—'I am'—and learn to gently abide in it. Abiding in the Self is the supreme benediction. Thus, on recognising the substratum, one will clearly discover that joys and sorrows are mere figments of imagination, like the blueness of the sky. That itself is *nirvāṇa*. One who knows the Truth and lives happily in the world as if he knows nothing, without declaring 'I am such and such a person' to anyone, is blessed indeed. '*aprakhyāpayannātmānaṃ ahaṃ evaṃvidhaḥ iti*' (Bhashya).

निःस्तुतिर्निर्ममस्कारो निःस्वधाकार एव च ।

चलाचल निकेतश्च यतिर्यादृच्छिको भवेत् ॥

No praise, no prostrations, no obligations to the dead ancestors (*svadha*), established in the unmoving Self even when the body moves! Performing actions as and when they come up by chance—such a great ascetic is blessed indeed!

तत्त्वमाध्यात्मिकं दृष्ट्वा तत्त्वं दृष्ट्वा तु बाह्यतः ।

तत्त्वीभूतस्तदारामः तत्त्वादप्रच्युतो भवेत् ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 2.37-38)

Realise the truth from within, realise the truth from without. Become one with the truth and be forever established in it without a slip in the knowledge.

By enquiring 'Who am I?' merge the 'I-thought' in pure Consciousness. Thus, merging the limited sense in the pure beingness, recognise the infinite Self as I am. This is, knowing the *tattva* from within, that is, in the *nirvikalpa samādhi* state—*ādhyātmika*. This is the import of the *mahāvākya* '*tattvamasi*'. Here, one knows that the 'I' is Brahman.

After that inner recognition when you wake up for working out the remaining *prārabdha*, do not be deluded, and lament, 'O! I have fallen into *samsāra*, I forgot that I am the Self, now I see the world and misery'. Instead '*sadaiva brahmāsmītyeva apracyuto bhavet*—remain firmly as "Brahman I am." Never ever slip from this knowledge.' This is seeing the *Tattva* externally; through the senses too, he perceives nothing but the Brahman. The real Knower of Truth—the *tattvavid*—is one who sees no difference between *samādhi* and *vyavahāra* (worldly interactions). His *tattvajñāna* remains unaffected whether the mind is still or active. He constantly abides in the Self. This is *sahajanirvikalpa*.

Q: Is there any difference between deep sleep and the state of the Knower of Truth?

A: Yes, like the difference between night and day. In deep sleep, the mind remains 'deluded in the seed of ignorance—

avidyātamōbīja mōhagrasta'. The *vāsanās* for actions, and desires for various enjoyments remain dormant within. But the mind, which has been refined in the blazing fire of Self-enquiry, remains serene at all times. There the mind clouds not the luminous *chit*—the Self. Therefore, they are totally different from each other. Of course, we speak of both from the waking state only.

लीयते हि सुषुप्तौ तन्निगृहीतं न लीयते ।

तदेव निर्भयं ब्रह्म ज्ञानालोकं समन्ततः ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 3.35)

Deep sleep itself is the evidence for the fact that temporary dissolution of thoughts (*laya*) will not lead to liberation. Knowledge alone is helpful in the waking state. Destroying the mind through Self-enquiry in the waking state and experiencing the Consciousness 'I'-'I' as the effulgent Self free of all adjuncts, is the Self-knowledge of the *Jñāni*. This is the same as *samādhi*. '**nirvikalpā ca cinmātrā vṛttiḥ**'—this is the definition. This *nirvikalpa jñāna*—awareness of the Self—is not there in sleep. Of course, there is non-dual experience in deep sleep state, but no one can wakefully enter there to know it.

Awareness, liberation, *nirvāṇa* and freedom from misery, are to be experienced in the waking state alone. This is possible only in the Consciousness devoid of the workings of the mind, in the form of 'non-perception,

misperception, appearance and disappearance—***agrahaṇa-anyathāgrahaṇa-āvirbhāva-tirobhāva-varjita.***'

Sense objects are grasped in the wakeful state; that itself is the day. The sense objects are not known in sleep, and that is night. Neither grasping nor not knowing exists in pure Consciousness, as day and night are not present in the sun.

'supraśāntaḥ sakrjyātiḥ samādhiracalo'bhayaḥ—the constant experience of the supremely peaceful and ever-fulgent Consciousness is itself, the fearless and unmoving ***samādhi.***' One who has known this Truth is an *asparśa yogi*. Dattatreya, Narayana, Siva, Brahma, Suka, and Janaka, all hold the secret of this yoga. *Asparśayoga* happens in the Self alone, unlike the other yogas that happen in the realm of the mind that arises and subsides. Everyone has the experience 'I am'. The 'is-ness' indicates Existence, Truth, Consciousness. On close observation, one can see the 'I' (*aham-vṛtti*) arising and subsiding in this Existence. Self-enquiry is, consciously merging this I-thought in the Absolute Truth. This is called *nigraha*.

In the attempt to merge the mind in its source, there may be obstructions such as *laya*, *vikshepa*, and *kashāya*. *laya* is a joyful state that occurs while stilling the mind, without the clear awareness of the Self. This is an internal state that temporarily pleases and vanishes, like sleep. But as there is no awareness 'I am the Self', this becomes an

obstacle. *vikshepa* is the rising of thoughts in the mind. *kashāya* is a dull state of a mixture of *vāsanās*. The Self, untouched by any of these, shines constantly as 'is-ness', 'am-ness', as simple 'existence'. This existence is called *asparśa*. To make the attention stay there is *asparśayoga*.

Upanishad declares: '*asaṅgo hyayaṃ puruṣaḥ*—this Purusha, the Ātman, always remains unattached to everything.' Recognising this as 'I am' is *asparśa yoga*. If this recognition becomes clear, the defects of the mind will not in the least affect our abidance in the Self. This recognition is the Eternal dawn. This is the supremely peaceful *Brāhmi* state. Even yogis who do *upāsana* do not know this secret. This has to be grasped only from the Knowers of Brahman. The 'mind' of the *Jñāni* is divine intelligence itself. It remains ever at repose and is a repository of Peace, Bliss of *nirvāṇa* and Omniscience.

Without lapsing into defects like *laya*, *vikshepa* and *kashāya*, one must remain in pure Awareness (*jñapti*). Even the joy that arises from this must not be enjoyed objectively. Remaining apart from it will bring about fear. Remain as 'That' alone. There is no *laya*, and no thoughts. 'I'-'I'—the sparks of chit continually fly up from the fire of the heart. Remain like this, till the *chidagni* (fire of Consciousness) gets ignited. Into the blazing fire, offer everything including the individual sense, and rest in the Peace of total release like the clear, blue sky after a heavy rain. To merge in the heart

without leaving even a trace of ignorance is 'repose in Self—*turiyaviśrānti*'.

ज्ञानेन आकाशकल्पेन धर्मान्यो गगनोपमान् ।

ज्ञेयाभिन्नेन संबुद्धस्तंवन्दे द्विपदां वरम् ॥

(Mandukya Gaudapada Karika 4.1)

I prostrate to the great one who walks among men with infinite *jñāna* as boundless as space, and perceives the *dharmas* as limitless as the sky, with the knowledge devoid of the knower and the known.

To that Purushottama who has taught this supreme knowledge, no amount of prostrations will suffice—'*namō namaḥ sadgurubhyah*.'

संसाराध्वनि तापभानुकिरणप्रोद्धूतदाहव्यथा—

खिन्नानां जलकाङ्क्षया मरुभुवि भ्रान्त्या परिभ्राम्यताम् ।

अत्यासन्नसुधाम्बुधिं सुखकरं ब्रह्माद्वयं दर्शय—

न्त्येषा शाङ्करभारती विजयते निर्वाणसंदायिनी ॥

(Vivekachudamani 581)

To the one following the sorrowful path of the world, afflicted by the scorching rays of the three kinds of sorrows, and who wanders in search of water to quench his thirst in the desert of the world, the words of Acharya Sankara point out in close proximity, the blissful ocean of nectar which bestows *nirvāṇa*.



Excerpt Three - Profound discussions on *Vedānta*

Once, while Acharya Sankara and disciples were staying in Kedar, an ascetic asked: Lord! How do we meditate on the Self?

Acharya: Child! Meditation is only a process of the mind; *Jñāna* is the very nature of the Self. The mind usually meditates on the object of the senses. So, to withdraw it from that field, meditating—'I am Brahman' is the best way. This may be called '*śabdānuviddhasamādhi*'—concentration invoked by words of deep implication. One must think 'I am Brahman', and immerse the mind in that current of thought. Remembering that 'all is **Brahman**' ('*sarvaṃ khalvidam brahma*') even when external forms are seen, is '*bāhyaśabdānuviddhasamādhi*'—invoking *samādhi* with the *mahāvākyas*, even while seeing the world. This will gradually lead one to get established in *sahajasamādhi*.

Satyavrata: Lord! The idea, 'I am a man' is so natural.

Acharya: Does the idea that 'I am a man' prevail in you? The only thing that is natural for everyone is the sense of Existence, 'I am'. Even the body is a thing that is seen. The Awareness 'I-am' is the only experience. That alone is natural. '*astītyevopalabdhasya tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati*' (Kenopanishad)—One who holds the simple existence, the 'am'-ness as the Reality, to him the revelation of the Truth will happen.' Pay attention to that simple existence behind the experience 'I exist'. That is Brahman. **'That you are—**

Tattvamasi.' That is the essence of the natural awareness 'aham'. Thus, if you get acquainted with that Absolute Existence, and realise that it is the essence of the 'I', its beatitude will seep through your mind and begin to shine forth clearly. **The mind is the limitation that arises when one is not acquainted with this 'sat'—Existence.**

* * *

Krishnakesi: Lord! What is *yoga*?

Acharya: Krishnakesi! Where the five activities of the senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching—are not there, where the apprehensions and misapprehensions of the mind do not exist, where the intellect which makes conclusions remains quiet, where the screen of 'not knowing'—sleep—exists not, and where the effulgence of *śuddhabodha*—pure awareness—alone is known uninterruptedly, that indeed is *Yoga*.

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।

बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।

अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥

(Kathopanishad 2.3.10-11)

According to *Śruti*, *Yoga* occurs when the mind enters the heart—'*hṛdāmanīṣa*'. Entering the Heart with awareness is *yoga*. Entering with ignorance is sleep. '*sarvānarthasamyogaviyoga-lakṣaṇā hīyamasthā yoginaḥ*—

this is a state which releases the yogi from the grip of all miseries and bestows the absolute restfulness in the Heart.'

प्रत्यक्षं हि ह्येतदजितकरणतया बाह्यविषयासङ्गानृतप्ररूढत्वात् न
हार्दब्रह्मणि मनस्तिष्ठति ।... अतः स य एतानेवं ... उपासनया
वशीकरोति स, ... प्रतिपद्यते ... हार्दं ब्रह्म ।

(Chandogya Bhashya 3.13)

It is seen in seekers that due to lack of sense control, the mind filled with illusions of external attachments, fails miserably to get anchorage in the Heart—Brahman. Only those who have won over the mind and the senses through *upāsana* are seen to rest perfectly in this Heart-space.

Q: What is the difference between this state and sleep?

Acharya: This state is not like sleep. Here there are neither projections like 'I', 'he', 'you', etc., nor veiling of these, as in sleep. '*etasyām hi avasthāyām avidyādhyāropaṇavarjita-svarūpapraṭiṣṭha ātmā.*' Here, there is uninterrupted abidance in the real nature—Ātman devoid of the superimposition of *avidyā*. This state is something from where one cannot fall, as the intellect due to which one slips from the spiritual path, remains absolutely quiet. Even if 'yoga' departs, the impression of that state will have a deep impact on the intellect. The intellect that has absorbed the Truth will remain steady and unshaken. Therefore, there is no fall for the *yogi* even when engaged in action.

The *yogi* does profound contemplation (*manana*) on the Self and as the sacred culmination of the practice, merges in the state of *samādhi*. Here, unlike in sleep, the mind merges in the Heart with the seed of enlightenment in its womb ('*satpratyayagarbha*'). Hence it wakes up from this state, luminous and fully enlightened. Therefore, the experience of Truth is not absent in *yoga*, as it is in sleep. (Kathopanishad Bhashya)

Krishnakesi: Lord! Please elaborate on that yoga where the intellect is filled with the knowledge of Truth ('*satpratyayagarbha*').

Acharya: Krishnakesi! When the desires of the mind become totally extinct due to *Brahmavichāra*, one becomes absorbed in *samādhi*. Desires are fragments of *avidyā*. These are merely shadow-ropes that bind one from within. If one reflects only on the 'I'-'I' that occurs constantly in all thoughts such as 'I am this body, this is my wealth, I am happy, I am sad', and enquires into its real nature, it will be known clearly that 'I am the pure Ātman unaffected by *saṃsāra*.' Then all desires will get burnt up. '*iha martyo amṛto bhavati, atra brahma samaśnute* (Kathopanishad Bhashya)—the mortal becomes immortal here and now. He becomes a ***Brahmanishṭha*** at this very moment.' This is the assertion of *Vedānta*. Have no doubt about this.

Krishnakesi: What is the first thing that is needed to attain this state?

Acharya: First, you must have faith that such a state of *samādhi* does exist. One could get that, only by being with a Self-realised Sage. If this *śraddhā* is awakened, the Lord from within will reveal the Brāhmi state, like opening of a lotus bud. '*astītyeva upalabdavyaḥ*—one should attain it by the conviction that it does exist', says *Śruti*. '*tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṃ svām*—if the *sādhaka* truly desires abidance in the Absolute Existence, the Self will reveal itself to him, from within.' One who has grasped the Absolute Existence, gradually attains the clear Awareness, 'I am That'. That itself is supreme delight.

Q: Lord! How can one say that the world which is seen has no real existence?

Acharya: If you know the 'seer', such a question will not arise. '*vijñātāraṃ are kena vijānīyāt*' (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)—how can one know the 'knower'? Enquire within, 'Who is the 'I'? Who knows everything?' Pure Consciousness devoid of any duality as the seer and the seen, will shine forth.

यदज्ञानतो भाति विश्वं समस्तं विनष्टं च सद्यो यदात्मप्रबोधे ।

मनोवागतीतं विशुद्धं विमुक्तं परं ब्रह्म नित्यं तदेवाहमस्मि ॥

(Swarupanusandhanashtakam 4)

By not knowing which, this entire universe appears, and by knowing which, all this disappears (like the snake in the rope); that eternal Truth which is beyond the mind and words; always pure and free; that **Brahman** am I.

* * *

A householder devotee prostrated before Acharya and said, “*samsāra* is scorching me as if my head is on fire. But I do not have the consent of *Dharmaśāstras* to renounce everything now. What shall I do?”

Acharya: असंगोऽहं असंगोऽहं असंगोऽहं पुनः पुनः ।

सच्चिदानन्दरूपोहमहमेवाहमव्ययः ॥

(Brahmajanavalimala 2)

Unattached, unattached, unattached am I. I am of the nature of *satchitānanda*. I am that I am, indestructible.

Keep on chanting, reflecting and meditating on this *śloka*. Very soon you will be liberated.



Excerpt Four - *Upadeśa Sāra*

Vishnumitra: Lord! Although we are Brahman itself, why do we forget it?

Acharya: Forgetfulness is the nature of the brain; remembrance too. Your *Brahmabhāva* is beyond these.

Forgetfulness and remembrance appear in the pure experience of Brahman. *Brahmānubhava* is not veiled by your forgetfulness. *Śravaṇa* and so on, are antidotes for the intellect, for its forgetfulness. When one recollects it, he experiences joy like the one who gives up the sorrow of the loss of his golden necklace and becomes happy on recognising that it was never lost and was always there around his neck. That is it.

जानन् अजानंश्च सर्वोजन्तुः सद्-ब्रह्मैव तथापि तत्त्वमसीति प्रतिबोधितो
विद्वान् सदेव नान्यः अस्मीति जानन् सदेव भवति ।

(Chandogya Bhashya 8.3.3)

Whether they know it or not, all creatures are Brahman or pure Existence. Yet, the wise one, when told by the Guru 'YOU ARE THAT—*Tattvamasi*', truly becomes 'That' with firm conviction. He realises that 'I am that Existence alone; nothing else.'

Like this, even in deep sleep, although everyone remains merged in that Supremely Peaceful Existence (*samprasāda*), only the one who has the recognition, identifies as 'I am That'. Realisation is the recognition of one's true identity. Even now, what is experienced as 'I' is Brahman only. One who knows this will have the assurance, 'I am that Infinite Brahman like space, without any limitations. *'ahamasmi sarvātmā paraṃ brahmetiniścitamatirbrāhmaṇo bhavati*—this Knowledge itself is Experience. Indeed, he alone is a *brāhmaṇa* who has this Knowledge. *apakṛṣyamāṇāyāṃ avidyāyāṃ vidyāyāṃ ca*

*kāṣṭhām gatāyām sarvātmabhāvaḥ mokṣaḥ*⁵²—when ignorance is destroyed, and knowledge reaches its zenith, *sarvātmabhāva* (the awareness that 'I am everything') will arise. This is liberation.'

Satyavrata: Lord! Will everyone get rid of *avidyā* by listening to *Vedānta*?

Acharya: Certainly. '*sā ca avidyā nātmanaḥ svabhāvaḥ*—ignorance is not the nature of the Self' (Brihadaranyaka Bhashya). The nature of the Self is the absence of all worldly attributes. But there is limitation in the waking and dream states due to identification with the body and other adjuncts. The Self so spontaneously reveals its gentle, pure existence in deep sleep, without the body, mind and the ego. The 'I-thought' is the primal ignorance and when it springs up *Brahmatva* is invariably forgotten. When the 'I' is made to subside in its source, the *Brāhmi* state shines forth. One who sees duality has fear. *Śruti* says '*yatra taditara itaraṃ paśyati*—where one sees the other.' Brihadaranyaka states '*dvitīyād vai bhayaṃ bhavati*—fear comes from the second', '*yatra sarvātmaivābhūt*—where all has become the Self' and so on. When there is oneness with the Self, where is fear?

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि अत्मैवाभूत् विजानतः ।

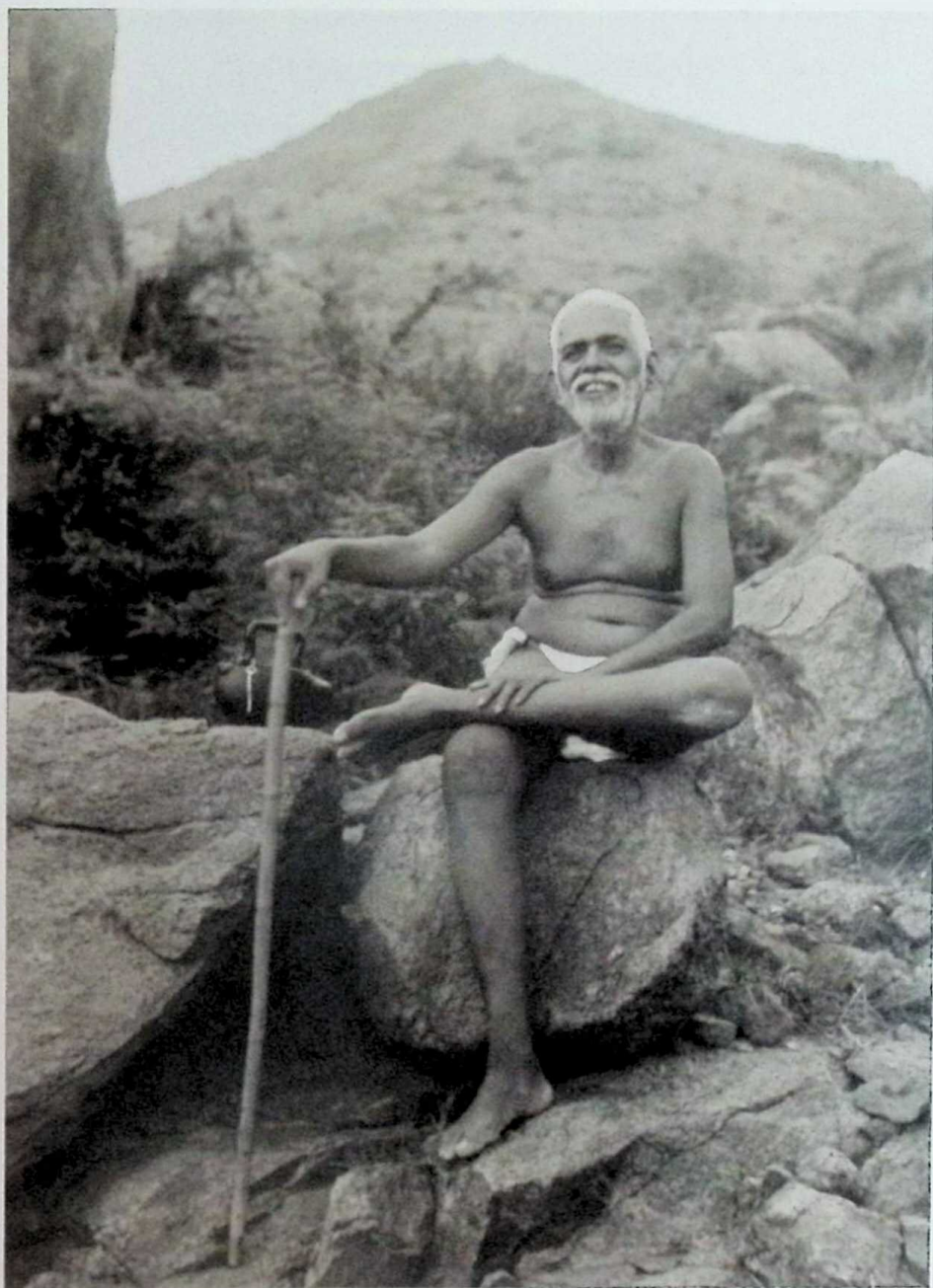
तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

(Isavasya Upanishad 7)

⁵² Brihadaranyaka Bhashya

Where is delusion and misery for the one in whom everything has become the Self? Everything remains as One.





DAKSHINAMURTI STAVA

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यथा निद्रया ।
यः साक्षात्कुरुते प्रबोधसमये स्वात्मानमेवाद्वयं
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ १ ॥

*viśvaṃ darpaṇa-drśyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṃ nijāntargataṃ
paśyannātmani māyayā bahirivodbhūtaṃ yathā nidrayā ।
yaḥ sākṣātkurute prabodha-samaye svātmānamevādvayaṃ
tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥ 1 ॥*

बीजस्याऽन्तरिवाङ्कुरो जगदिदं प्राङ्निर्विकल्पं पुनः
मायाकल्पितदेशकालकलना वैचित्र्यचित्रीकृतम् ।
मायावीव विजृम्भयत्यपि महायोगीव यः स्वेच्छया
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ २ ॥

*bījasyā'ntarivāṅkuro jagad-idaṃ prāṇnirvikalpaṃ punaḥ
māyā-kalpita-deśa-kāla-kalanā vaicitrya-citrīkṛtaṃ ।
māyāvīva vijṛmbhayatyapi mahā-yogīva yaḥ svecchayā
tasmai śrī-gurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī-dakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥ 2 ॥*

यस्यैव स्फुरणं सदात्मकमसत्कल्पार्थगं भासते
साक्षात्तत्त्वमसीति वेदवचसा यो बोधयत्याश्रितान् ।
यत्साक्षात्करणाद्भवेन्न पुनरावृत्तिर्भवाम्भोनिधौ
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥ ३ ॥

*yasyaiva sphuraṇaṃ sadātmakam-asat-kalpārthagam bhāsate
sākṣāt-tat-tvam-asīti veda-vacasā yo bodhayatyāśritān ।
yat-sākṣāt-karaṇād-bhavenna punarāvṛttir-bhavāmbhonidhau
tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥ 3 ॥*

नानाच्छिद्रघटोदरस्थितमहादीपप्रभा भास्वरं
 ज्ञानं यस्य तु चक्षुरादिकरणद्वारा बहिः स्पन्दते ।
 जानामीति तमेव भान्तमनुभात्येतत्समस्तं जगत्
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥४॥

*nānācchidraghaṭodarasthitamahādīpaprabhā bhāsvaram
 jñānam yasya tu cakṣurādikaraṇadvārā bahiḥ spandate ।
 jānāmīti tameva bhāntamanubhātyetatsamastam jagat
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥4॥*

देहं प्राणमपीन्द्रियाण्यपि चलां बुद्धिं च शून्यं विदुः
 स्त्रीवालान्धजडोपमास्त्वहमिति भ्रान्ता भृशं वादिनः ।
 मायाशक्तिविलासकल्पितमहाव्यामोहसंहारिणे
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥५॥

*deham prāṇamapīndriyānyapi calām buddhiṃ ca śūnyaṃ viduḥ
 strī-bālāndha-jaḍopamāstvahamiti bhrāntā bhr̥ṣaṃ vādinaḥ ।
 māyāśakti-vilāsa-kalpita-mahā-vyāmoha-saṃhāriṇe
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥5॥*

राहुग्रस्तदिवाकरेन्दुसदृशो मायासमाच्छादनात्
 सन्मात्रः करणोपसंहरणतो योऽभूत्सुषुप्तः पुमान् ।
 प्रागस्वाप्समिति प्रबोधसमये यः प्रत्यभिज्ञायते
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥६॥

*rāhugrastadivākarendusadṛśo māyāsamācchādanāt
 sanmātraḥ karaṇopasaṃharaṇato yo'bhūtsuṣuptaḥ pumān ।
 prāg-asvāpsamiti prabodha-samaye yaḥ pratyabhijñāyate
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥6॥*

बाल्यादिष्वपि जाग्रदादिषु तथा सर्वास्ववस्थास्वपि
 व्यावृत्तास्वनुवर्तमानमहमित्यन्तः स्फुरन्तं सदा ।
 स्वात्मानं प्रकटीकरोति भजतां यो मुद्रयाभद्रया
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥७॥

*balyādiṣvapi jāgradādiṣu tathā sarvāsvavasthāsvapi
 vyāvṛttāsvanuvartamānam-aham-ityantaḥ sphurantaṁ sadā ।
 svātmānaṁ prakaṭīkaroti bhajatāṁ yo mudrayā bhadrayā
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrī dakṣināmūrtaye ॥7॥*

विश्वं पश्यति कार्यकारणतया स्वस्वामिसम्बन्धतः
 शिष्याचार्यतया तथैव पितृपुत्राद्यात्मना भेदतः ।
 स्वप्ने जाग्रति वा य एष पुरुषो मायापरिभ्रामितः
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥८॥

*viśvaṁ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā svasvāmisambandhataḥ
 śiṣyācāryatayā tathaiva pitṛputrādyātmanā bhedataḥ ।
 svapne jāgrati vā ya eṣa puruṣo māyāparibhramitaḥ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥8॥*

भूरम्भांस्यनलोऽनिलोऽम्बरमहर्नाथो हिमांशुः पुमान्
 इत्याभाति चराचरात्मकमिदं यस्यैव मूर्त्यष्टकम्
 नान्यत् किञ्चन विद्यते विमृशतां यस्मात्परस्माद्विभोः
 तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥९॥

*bhūrambhāṁsyanalo'nilo'mbaramaharnātho himāṁśuḥ pumān
 ityābhāti carācarātmakamidaṁ yasyaiva mūrtyaṣṭakam ।
 nānyat kiñcana vidyate vimṛśatāṁ yasmātparasmādvibhoḥ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ॥9॥*

सर्वात्मत्वमिति स्फुटीकृतमिदं यस्मादमुष्मिन् स्तवे
 तेनास्य श्रवणात्तदर्थमननाद्यानाच्च संकीर्तनात् ।
 सर्वात्मत्वमहाविभूतिसहितं स्यादीश्वरत्वं स्वतः
 सिद्ध्येत्तत्पुनरष्टधा परिणतं चैश्वर्यमव्याहतम् ॥ १० ॥

*sarvātmatvamiti sphuṭīkṛtamidaṃ yasmādamuṣmin stave
 tenāsyā śravaṇāttadarthamananāddhyānācca saṃkīrtanāt ।
 sarvātmatvamahāvibhūtisahitaṃ syādīśvaratvaṃ svataḥ
 siddhyettatpunaraṣṭadhā pariṇataṃ caiśvaryamavyāhatam ॥10॥*



KAILASANATHASHTAKAM

Sri Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman

गौरी देहार्द्धमाद्यं सुमशरदहनं सुन्दरं फालनेत्रं
वामे स्कन्दं तथा श्रीकरिवरवदनं दक्षिणे धारयन्तम् ।
सिद्धाधीशं गभीरं कविकुलरमणं नित्यमात्मस्थमीशं
वन्दे सर्वज्ञमेकं यमिजनविनुतं वेदवेद्यं गृहस्थम् ॥ १ ॥

*gaurī dehārdhamādyam sumasāradahanam sundaram phālanetram
vāme skandam tathā śrīkarivaravadanam dakṣiṇe dhārayantam ।
siddhādhiśam gabhīram kavikularamaṇam nityamātmasthamīśam
vande sarvajñamekaṁ yamijanavinutaṁ vedavedyam grhastham ॥ १ ॥*

Lord Śiva—whose half of the body is Divine Mother Gauri, and on whose lap are seated His divine children, Skanda on the left and Gaṇapati on the right—is the mighty one who burnt Kāmadeva (god of passion), with His fiery eye in the forehead. Such a one is the most ideal *grihastha*—family man. He, of profound majesty, is the foremost amongst *siddhas*—perfect beings. He, the supreme poet and an inspiration for all poets, ever abides in the Self. To that all-knowing One known by the Vedas and meditated upon by the sages, I bow.

कैलासाचलकन्दरान्तरनिशं चिन्मात्रबोधे स्थितं
मध्ये प्रेमपरानुरागकलितेनाख्यान्तमेकात्मताम् ।

स्वानन्दामृतपूर्णगर्भवचसा गौरीं च शिष्याग्रणीं

त्वं ब्रह्मासि चितिश्च तत्परपरेत्याख्यान्तमीशं भजे ॥ २ ॥

*kailāsācalakandarāntaraniśam cinmātrabodhe sthitam
madhye premaparānurāgakalitenākhyāntamekātmatām ।
svānandāmṛtapūrṇagarbhavacasā gaurīm ca śiṣyāgrāṇīm
tvam brahmāsi citiśca tatparaparetyākhyāntamīśam bhaje ॥ २ ॥*

He, Śiva, always abides in *Samādhi* in the caves of Kailāsa. At times, He wakes up from the state of Nirvikalpa *Samādhi* (objectless awareness) and with an upsurge of ecstatic love, transmits the secret knowledge of Ātman to Divine Mother Gauri, who is the foremost amongst His disciples. He, the Lord, with words impregnated with the bliss of the Self, beckons His beloved and speaks thus, "Dear! Thou art Brahman. Pure Awareness is thy nature." That Lord of mystical beauty, I worship.

रात्रौ मन्दनिशाकरेन्द्रकलया वेदान्तवाक्यान्मुदा

वैराग्यादिभिरादृतानजसुतांस्संपाठयन्तं तथा ।

शीतस्पर्शसमीरवेगविधुतां सम्मार्जयन्तं जटां

यः कोऽप्यत्र विराजते च मुनिराडीशानसंज्ञं भजे ॥ ३ ॥

rātrau mandaniśākarendrakalayā vedāntavākyañmudā

vairāgyādibhirādṛtānajasutāṃssampāṭhayantaṃ tathā ।

śītasparśasamīravegavidhutāṃ sammārajayantaṃ jaṭāṃ

yaḥ ko'pyatra virājate ca munirāḍīśānasamjñāṃ bhaje ॥3॥

Stillness of the night. Sanatkumāras, the sons of Brahma, are seated before the Lord. He, with transcendental joy, teaches those dispassionate disciples in the comely moonlight. Often, the cool mountain breeze makes His hair fall on His face, and with His right hand, He gently brushes them away. Such an emperor of the mystics and sages, known as Īśāna, I worship.

साम्बः शीतहिमांशुकोमलशिरास्तारागणैस्सेवितो

तुङ्गं हैमगिरेरनन्तमहिमा गीतः पुराणैः श्रितः ।

ध्यानावस्थितनिश्चलायिततनुस्त्वारूढ योगो मुनिः

शान्तिस्सान्द्रपरागरेणुततिभिर्वातेरितो राजते ॥ ४ ॥

sāmbaḥ śītahimāṃśukomalaśirāstārāgaṇaissevito
 tuṅgaṃ haimagīreranantamahimā gītaḥ purāṇaiḥ śritaḥ ।
 dhyānāvasthitaniścalāyitatanustvārūḍha yogo muniḥ
 śāntissāndraparāgareṇutatibhīrvāterito rājate ॥4॥

Śiva, ever accompanied by Divine Mother Ambika, lives in the peak of Himagiri, whose infinite glories are sung by all *purāṇas*. Although Himself the Eternal Truth, He sits still in meditation, like a *muni* in the *Yogārūḍha* state. Solidified peace is He. The spiritual fragrance of His *Samādhi* pervades everywhere in the wind like the pollen of a divine flower.

देवः प्रेमपरानुरागविवशो देहं स्त्रियै दत्तवान्
 अन्यां लोकजपापपावनकरीं मौलौ निगूढामधात् ।
 पुत्रौ चापि तपः प्रभावजनितौ नित्यात्मनिष्ठापरौ
 एकं देवमनौपमं परशिवं शान्त्यै भजे सन्ततम् ॥ ५ ॥

devaḥ premaparānurāgavivaśo dehaṃ striyai dattavān
 anyāṃ lokajapāpapāvanakarīm maulau nigūḍhāmadhāt ।
 putrau cāpi tapaḥ prabhāvajanitau nityātmaniṣṭhāparau
 ekaṃ devamanaupamaṃ paraśivaṃ śāntyai bhaje santatam ॥5॥

The Lord, out of sheer love, gave half His body to a woman. Gangā, another woman who purifies all the sins of the world, hides in His matted locks. His two sons, born as fruits of *tapas*, are ever established in the Self. That one incomparable Lord, who bestows eternal peace, I worship.

एको वारिजटाधरश्च यमिराडाशावसानो मुदा
 सामाम्नाय ऋचाक्षरांश्च मधुरं तन्त्रीभिरुन्नादयन् ।
 वीणावादनतत्परो हिमगिरौ राकानिशां पूरयन्
 भृङ्गीशादिभिरर्चितो विजयते नादान्तवारां निधिः ॥ ६ ॥

*eko vārijaṭādharaśca yamirāḍḍāsāvasāno mudā
sāmāmnāya ṛcākṣarāṃśca madhuraṃ tantrībhīrunnādayan ।
vīṇāvādanatatparo himagirau rākāniśāṃ pūrayan
bhṛṅgīśādibhirarcito vijayate nādāntavārāṃ nidhiḥ ॥6॥*

It is the night of full moon in the Himalayas. Glistening in the moonlight, the snow-covered mountains appear as if made of silver. Here, Śiva, the emperor of mystics, the one who clothes Himself with the infinite space, and the one who carries immense mass of water in His *jaṭa*, is playing the *veeṇa*. *Mantras* from the *Rigveda* and the *Sāmaveda* reverberate from the *veeṇa* of the Lord. This full moon night in the Himalayas is ecstatic with divine music. He is indeed the ocean of transcendental sound, worshipped by divine beings such as Bhṛngi.

रात्रौ सर्वे प्रसुप्तास्तुहिनगिरिरसौ निश्चलाङ्गो बभूव
नन्दीशाद्या मुनीन्द्रा निजसुखरसिका ब्रह्मनिष्ठा बभूवुः ।
एको देवो गभीरो हिमगिरितनयां स्वप्रियां मोदनीयां
मोदाद् गङ्गातटान्ते श्रुतिमतविभवैर्मोदयामास देवीं ॥७॥

*rātrau sarve prasuptāstuhinagirirasau niścalāṅgo babhūva
nandīśādyā munīndrā nijasukharasikā brahmaniṣṭhā babhūvuḥ ।
eko devo gabhīro himagiritanayāṃ svapriyāṃ modanīyāṃ
modād gaṅgātāṭānte śrutimatavibhavairmodayāmāsa devīm ॥7॥*

Still hours of the night; all are asleep. The snow-capped mountains too are quiet and tranquil. Sages like Nandīśa, who are habituated to inner bliss, have retired into meditation and have got established in Brahman. In that silent night, on the banks of Gangā, that one mighty Divine Being is blissfully awake! He inebriates His beloved, the daughter of Himavān, with His teachings on the Upanishads! She, the divine consort of Śiva, also revels in ecstasy!

तस्मिन् कैलासश्चै तुहिनकररुचा प्लाविते हैमतुङ्गे
धन्यो वायुः प्रवाति श्रुतिसुमसुरभिः शर्वरी मौनगन्धा ।

गङ्गा गम्भीरकाया हरहरतरला रङ्गमाप्लावयन्ती
गायन्ती सा स्रवन्ती प्रतिपदमथ मे मङ्गलं देदिशीतु ॥८॥

*tasmin kailāsaśṛṅge tuhinakararucā plāvite haimatuṅge
dhanyo vāyuh pravāti śrutisumasurabhiḥ śarvarī maunagandhā ।
gaṅgā gambhīrakāyā haraharataralā raṅgamāplāvayantī
gāyantī sā sravantī pratipadamatha me maṅgalaṁ dediśītu ॥8॥*

With light falling on its snow-clothed peaks, Kailāsa shines like burnished gold. The blessed wind spreads the fragrance of Śiva's *mauna* which is the flower of *Śruti*. Yes, the very air is infused with the divine fragrance of *Samādhi*! And lo! with sheer beauty, Gangā flows with the incessant chanting of 'Hara, Hara!' She flows and sings like the eternal divine bard! Let Her divine melody bestow the knowledge of Brahman (auspiciousness) to all.



GLOSSARY

<i>abhisheka</i>	the ritualistic bathing of the <i>linga</i> or idol with water, oil and other auspicious substances
<i>acharya</i>	teacher
<i>aham</i>	I
<i>ahaṅkāra</i>	ego or that which produces <i>abhimāna</i> , the sense of 'I' and 'mine.'
<i>ajñāna</i>	ignorance
<i>ajñāni</i>	ignorant one
<i>ākāśagangā</i>	celestial river
<i>akhandākāra vṛtti</i>	unbroken experience
<i>anna</i>	matter, food
<i>āntarika</i>	internal
<i>antaryāmi</i>	inner being
<i>anubhava</i>	experience
<i>anubhūti</i>	one's own discovery of the Truth
<i>anugraha</i>	grace
<i>āpa</i>	water, liquid
<i>ātman</i>	Self
<i>ātmānubhava</i>	Self-Experience
<i>ātmānubhūti</i>	Self-Experience
<i>ātmavidyā</i>	knowledge of the Self
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion
<i>bhāshā</i>	language
<i>bhashya</i>	commentary
<i>bodham</i>	consciousness
<i>brahman</i>	see <i>ātman</i>
<i>brahmajñāna</i>	knowledge of the Self

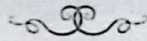
brahmavidyā	science of the Self
buddhi	intellect
chaṇḍāla	class of people considered to be outcast and untouchable
chidākāśa	space of consciousness
chin-mudrā	symbol of consciousness
chit	consciousness
deśika	spiritual guide, one who points and guides
dīkshā	initiation
ḍṛk	the seer
ḍṛshṭi	sight, attention
ḍṛśya	that which is perceived, the seen
guru	preceptor
hṛdaya sthānam	heart-centre
japa	chanting
jīva	individual soul
jīvanmukti	liberation while in the body
jñāna	knowledge of the Self
jñānaswarūpa	one who is one of the nature of Knowledge
jñāni	Realised Master
jñapti	immediate recognition, understanding, intelligence
kevala-anubhava	non-dual experience
kṛpā	grace
kshatriya	warrior class
kuṭīr	hut
mahāvākya	great aphoristic declaration of the Supreme Truth
malina	impure
manana	reflection
maṇḍala	plane

mantra	a sacred utterance
mātā	mother
mauna	spiritual silence which makes words unnecessary
māyā	the illusion or appearance of the phenomenal world
mukti	liberation
muni	sage
namaskāra	prostration
nayana	eyes
nididhyāsana	meditation
nirvikalpa	without thoughts, cloudless
nishṭha	abidance
nitya-siddha	ever-attained
padārtha	an object outside
paramātmā	the Supreme Self
parāparam	the Absolute Supreme One
prabodha	waking up from sleep or ignorance; becoming conscious
prajña	consciousness
prakaraṇa grantha	a text which expounds the gist of the Upanishads in simple language
praḷaya	deluge
pramāṇa	proof, authentic, verified
prāṇa	vital life force
prārabdha	the <i>karmas</i> which have already started fruition
pratyabhijñā	spontaneous recognition of the Self
pravachana	exposition
prāyaschitta	atonement
purāṇa	epic

<i>rishi</i>	sage
<i>sādhaka</i>	seeker, spiritual aspirant
<i>sādhana</i>	spiritual practice
<i>sādhu</i>	renunciate, monk
<i>sahasranama</i>	thousand names
<i>śakti-pāta</i>	sudden experience of the power of Grace
<i>samādhi</i>	a state of deep concentration resulting in union with or absorption into ultimate reality
<i>saṃsāra</i>	the continuous cycle of birth and death, which the <i>jīva</i> is subjected to
<i>saṃsāri</i>	worldly person
<i>saṃskāra</i>	innate tendencies
<i>śānti</i>	peace
<i>sanyāsa</i>	renunciation
<i>sanyāsī</i>	renunciate, monk
<i>sārūpyam</i>	identification with
<i>śāstra</i>	scripture
<i>sat</i>	existence
<i>satsaṅg</i>	association with saints
<i>satta-chit</i>	existence consciousness
<i>siddhi</i>	attainment of occult power
<i>śishya</i>	disciple
<i>śivam</i>	auspiciousness
<i>śloka</i>	verse
<i>spandana</i>	meditative throb
<i>śraddhā</i>	power of attention
<i>śravaṇa</i>	act of listening
<i>śrota</i>	listener

śruti	In <i>Vedānta</i> , it is the name for the Upanishads. Generally, it means the constant underlying note of music.
stava	hymn
stotra	hymn
śuddha	pure
sukha	happiness
sushupti	the state of deep sleep
swarūpa	true nature, essential nature
tapas	austerity, penance
tapasvi	ascetic
tattva	principle
teja	spiritual effulgence/brilliance
tīrtha	sacred water
tripuṭi	the triad of experience, the experienced and the experiencing (<i>jīva</i> , <i>jagat</i> and <i>Īśvara</i>)
turīya	fourth
upadeśa	guidance
upādhi	bodily limitations, adjuncts, attributes
upāsana	worship
vāk	word, speech
varṇa	class
vānaprastha	the third phase of life where one goes to the forest for austerity, leaving home after handing over the domestic responsibilities to the sons.
vāsanā	subliminal behavioural tendency
vaṭavṛksha	banyan tree
vedic dharma	Vedic injunctions
vīṇa, veeṇa	a stringed musical instrument

vibhūti	a special divine manifestation, glory of the Lord
vichāra	enquiry
vidyā	knowledge, science
vikalpa	clouding of inner vision
vrata	penance
vṛtti	thought
yama	god of death
yogārūḍha	one who is neither interested in action nor in pleasures
yukti	reasoning



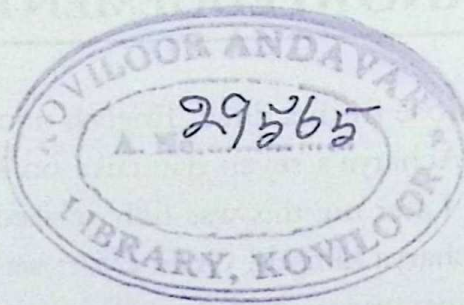
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work arose from a direct English translation by Smt Meera of Nochur Acharya's seven day talks on Dakshinamurti stava at Bangalore. Later on, this was fully revised and chiselled to perfection by Acharya himself. Great effort was put in by Sri Bhasi, Sri Sankaranarayanan and Smt Priya in editing and typesetting the work.

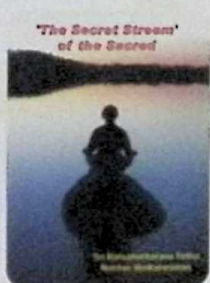
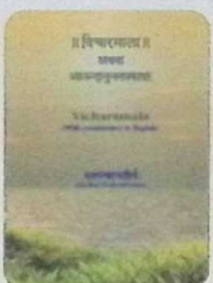
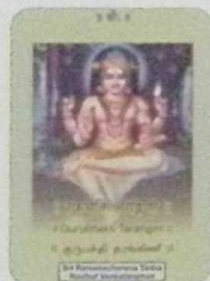
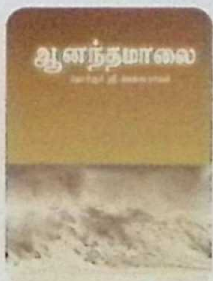
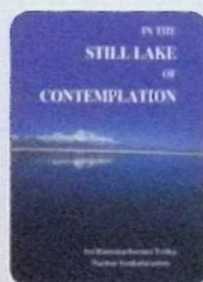
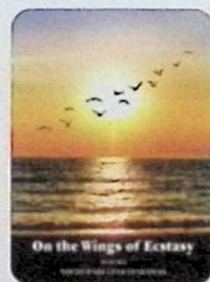
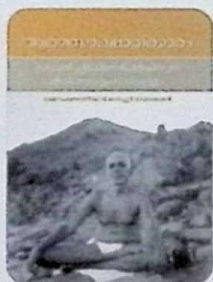
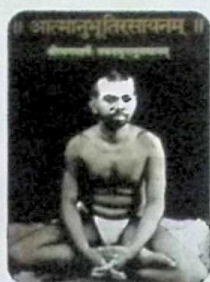
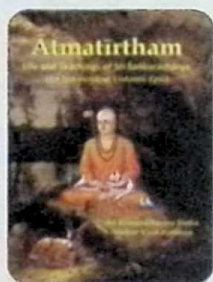
Our sincere *pranams* to revered Sri V. Ganesanji and Sri K. V. Subrahmaniam of Ramanasramam who went through the commentary with great joy and provided valuable suggestions.

The most unique picture of Siva as Yogeswara in the cover, is a sketch by Sri Nochur Acharya himself. The cover design was done with exquisite perfection by Sri Ganesh of Bangalore together with Sri VHS Moni of Coimbatore. Printing was done with great care by Sri Chandrasekaran of Sri Bharati Printers. Our thanks to them and all others who have served with their heart for this book.

Sri Ramana Maharshi Brahmavidyasrama



SELECTED TITLES BY ACHARYA



Visit www.VoiceOfRishis.org for more.

Words from an Enlightened Being are sparks from the flame of his inner illumination. The moment the seeker's thoughts come in contact with those divine sparks, like the inflammable hay, they get aflame with Truth.

Dakshinamurti Stotra, one of the most profound compositions of Sankaracharya, is truly special as it conveys the highest knowledge—*Advaita*—in just ten verses. This commentary by Sri Ramanacharanatirtha Nochur Venkataraman is full of insights penetrating into the very heart of *Vedanta jnana*. The ineffable clarity born out of Acharya's direct and intimate experience of the Self is pure magic.

This majestic work is filled with clear guidance for a seeker, memorable anecdotes, cautions about the pitfalls along the way, various steps in this pathless path and innumerable meditative gems. The sheer poetic beauty of Acharya's words makes this an ecstatic classic.



SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI
BRAHMAVIDYASRAMA

www.voiceofrishis.org



₹ 200